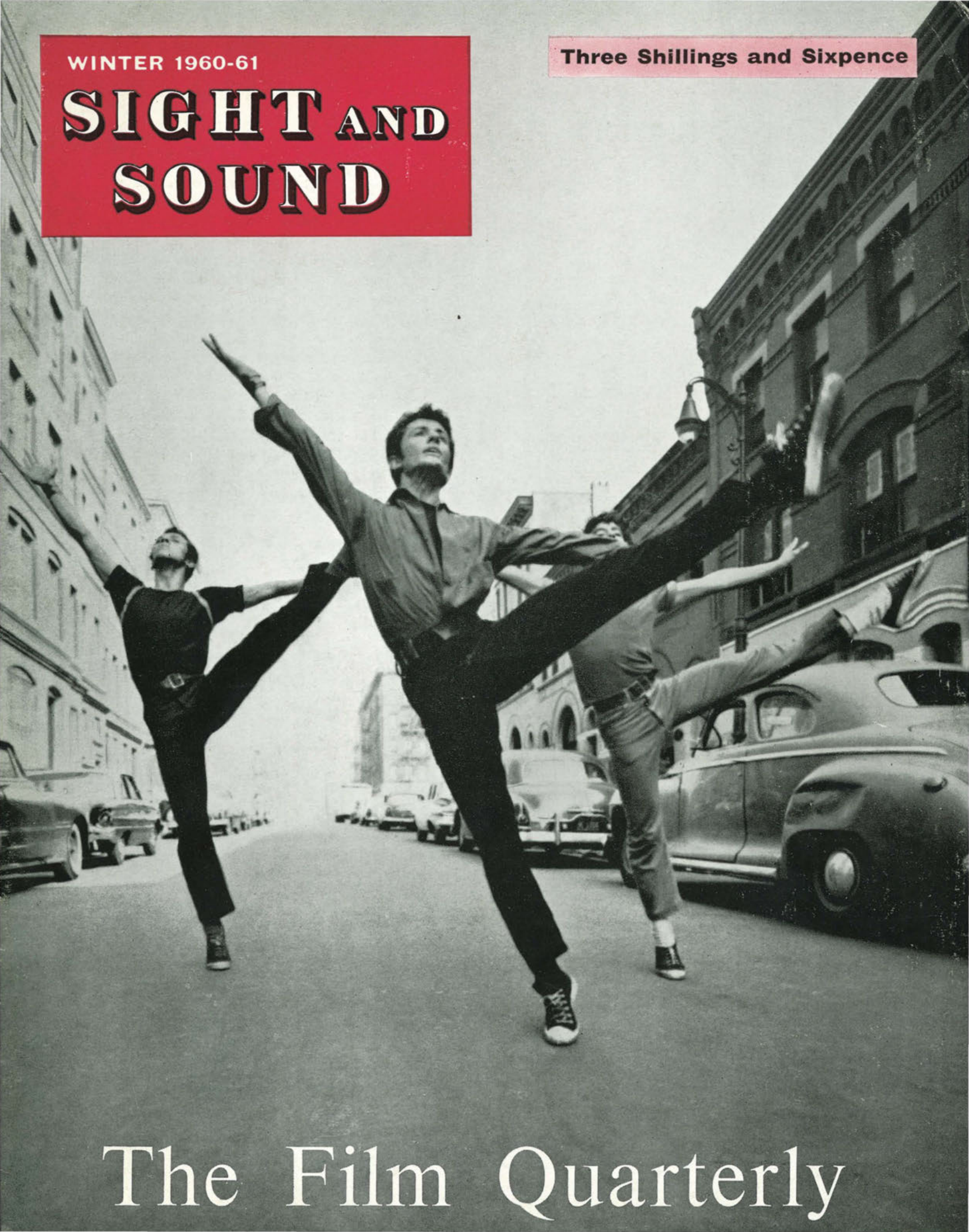


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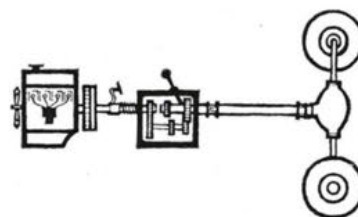
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SIGHT AND SOUND

The International Film Quarterly

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THE FRONT PAGE

THE ANNUAL HONOURS LIST, the critic's traditional ten, this year comes close to compiling itself. No need to repeat comments made previously or elsewhere in this issue; enough to list the titles. *L'Avventura*, the film of the year, *Shadows*, possibly the trend-setter of the year, the monumental second part of *Ivan the Terrible*, as little of a museum piece as any film could be which reached us after such an interval, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, proudly indigenous and by far the most encouraging film from our own studios, *Hiroshima mon Amour* and *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, both mentioned last year but only reaching the commercial screen during 1960, *A Generation*, a considerably more overdue arrival, and *Jalsaghar*, from the fourth London Festival.

The ninth and tenth places, as always, are rather more difficult. Visconti's *Rocco and His Brothers*, for its power and despite its weaknesses, Bresson's *Pickpocket*, arguably at once his 'purest' film and his least successful, Torre Nilsson's *La Caida*, with its corrupted innocents, Cocteau's self-styled valediction to the screen, *Le Testament d'Orphée*, or Hitchcock's diabolical *Psycho*: all these have claims. Personal taste leans, though, towards another late arrival, Ichikawa's *The Burmese Harp*, and to Renoir's *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, ramshackle in construction but full of delight and impudence. However you look at it, it's an exciting list.

L'Avventura and *Shadows* have set the pace, though in opposite directions. *L'Avventura*, we say, is "like a novel" in its approach to character, its extraordinarily exact detail, its ability to impose not only its own landscape but the way we are to look at it. But its methods are entirely of the cinema: Antonioni "writes" a film in the sense that he commands it as one commands words on a page. John Cassavetes' *Shadows* has, in fact, a good deal of the art which conceals art; but its stand is taken on improvisation, spontaneity. Neither work, one feels, could have been made very much earlier in the cinema's history. Already both are landmarks, films to steer by—though not for lesser talents to imitate.

Several conclusions could be drawn from the above list, among them the obvious one that only two of the films (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *Psycho*) have reached the non-specialist cinemas and that only *Psycho* comes from Hollywood. The American studios have given us some spirited entertainment (the agreeably frivolous *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, the Monroe-Montand duologues of *Let's Make Love*, the cool, composed excitements of *Murder by Contract*). Otherwise, though, the emphasis has been largely on spectacle (*Ben-Hur*, *Spartacus*), over-heated adaptation (*The Fugitive Kind*, *Butterfield 8*) or sensation (*Private Property*, etc.). And it would be ungrateful not to express appreciation of the year's most intoxicating absurdity: the moment when Lana Turner is required to drive the getaway car in *Portrait in Black*.

Private Property owed its showing to one of 1960's more bizarre developments, the rise of the club cinema, which should not precisely be regarded as the commercial equivalent to the film society. The censor may have become more lenient, but the clubs have discovered that he can be by-passed; and

have done this with the Secretary of the B.B.F.C.'s own support. Generally, the patterns forming in previous years seem to have become more distinct. On the one hand, we have the cinema of creative advance and discovery, which increasingly seems to mean films for the specialised cinemas and the National Film Theatre. In the big cinemas films become ever longer, and their target is more and more the 'hard ticket' customer. And, from the commercial cinema and spilling over into the clubs, come the out and out appeals to sensationalism, ranging from Britain's *Peeping Tom* to Japan's lubricious *The Joyhouse of Yokohama*. It is a pattern which cannot be viewed without a certain uneasiness. Admirable though it is that the audience for serious cinema is growing, it is equally important that the boundary lines between, so to speak, Academy films and Odeon films should remain fluid.

One of the more freakish events of the year was the dead-heat race to get the two Oscar Wildes on the screen—to be followed, it appears, by a match between two Lawrences. It did, at least, produce two of the year's more expert performances, by Lionel Jeffries (Queensberry in *The Trials*) and Ralph Richardson (Carson in *Oscar Wilde*). Other performances to note: Sophia Loren, blazing her way through three films but happiest on home ground in *It Started in Naples*; Kay Kendall's astringent comedy in *Once More, with Feeling*, a touching epilogue to her career; the commanding professionalism of Fredric March in *Inherit the Wind*; the unrelenting attack of Laurence Olivier in *The Entertainer*; and Martin Held's bombastic, unregenerate ex-Nazi in *Roses for the Prosecutor*. A remarkable trio, Anouk Aimée, Yvonne Furneaux and Anita Ekberg, distinguish *La Dolce Vita*. But one doesn't really need, perhaps, to look beyond Albert Finney in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and Monica Vitti in *L'Avventura* for 1960's most striking playing.

Fiction has been over-shadowing non-fiction. Unusually, though, the most timely documentary, the technically deficient but bravely resolute *Come Back Africa*, and the most enjoyable exercise in observation, *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, both came from America. So did the most enjoyable cartoon, Ernest Pintoff's *The Interview*. In this country, the non-fiction work that's concerned with people as well as things seems increasingly to be left to television, and a film like Basil Wright's *A Place for Gold*, with its sense of tradition and craftsmanship, represents the accomplished opposite from the documentary which finds its more adventurous poetry in the human landscape.

Finally, a record of the cinema's losses during the year. A patriarch died in Victor Sjöström, film-maker, more recently actor, one of the founders of Sweden's silent cinema and director of two of Lillian Gish's best performances. Mack Sennett cannot be thought of as a patriarch: he belonged to Hollywood's eternal youth, just as Clark Gable came out of its confident, optimistic maturity. Jacques Becker's death deprived France of one of her major post-war talents and acutest observers. In this country we lost A. E. Matthews, the composer Matyas Seiber, and an able critic, Campbell Dixon of the *Daily Telegraph*. The retirement from the *Observer* of C. A. Lejeune and from the *Evening News* of Jympson Harman will not, one hopes, mean the end of their critical careers: columnists *par excellence*, they have both been part of the critical scene throughout the lifetime of this magazine, pioneers who managed to hold on to their enthusiasm.

Opposite: Elia Kazan rehearses a scene with Barbara Loden, the "discovery" of his new film, *"Splendour in the Grass"*.

Michelangelo Antonioni

*An Interview *Five Films

*L'Avventura



AN INTERVIEW with ANTONIONI

by MICHÈLE MANCEAUX

Michèle Manceaux, film correspondent of L'Express, interviewed Michelangelo Antonioni recently at the golf club on the outskirts of Milan which he had taken over for the shooting of his latest film, La Notte. The interview first appeared in a shortened version in L'Express, to whom we are grateful for permission to publish a fuller version of the text.

ANTONIONI LOOKS PALE and tense. He has been filming now for thirty-two nights, right through from five every evening until seven in the morning, and his own fatigue is matched by that of his cast and technical crew. The location is a golf club near Milan, transformed for screen purposes into a private villa. The action of *La Notte*, which concerns a couple (Jeanne Moreau and Marcello Mastroianni) on the verge of a break-up, brings the director back to one of his favourite themes: the failure of communication which has bankrupted their relationship.

Antonioni is not especially anxious to retain his reputation as a "difficult" director; and in *La Notte*, to satisfy his producer, he has contrived a happy ending of a sort. But Antonioni has a genius for despair, and this attempt at reconciliation should constitute one of the most poignant embraces the screen has shown us. It is a key scene in the film; and at dusk and dawn each day, in the few moments of half-light, Antonioni is filming it in short snatches.

It's now seven in the evening. The actors, made up and ready, have been there since five, and they're waiting while preparations are made for an immense tracking shot across the park. At last everything is in place. Jeanne Moreau crosses the park, tracked by the camera. There's barely time to begin the shot two or three times, and already the light is fading.

Back to the house. Since Antonioni is shooting inside a room, each shot requires a shift in the placing of the furniture and lights. Between each take one sees, in this vast house, people wandering about rather like fish in an aquarium. It's a long night; and towards five in the morning, curled up in armchairs, one stumbles upon a weary stills cameraman, a sleeping hairdresser.

The scene Antonioni is shooting involves three people: Jeanne Moreau, Marcello Mastroianni and Monica Vitti. There's something aquarium-like about this as well. They criss-cross about the room, to and fro, unspeaking and communicating only through looks and gestures. Antonioni controls his *mise-en-scène* like a ballet. The players, cut off from one another by window panes, placed on different levels, carrying on back-to-back conversations, are manoeuvred with an attention which goes beyond the merely aesthetic. Antonioni looks after every detail: he straightens a lock of hair, rips the corner off a whiskey bottle label to make it look less new, throws a towel down on a chair, takes his time about picking a tie for his leading man. To the actors, however, he does no more than indicate positions and gestures, never intonations.

It's a damp evening, and moths are fluttering into the clusters of lights. Calmly, one after another, Antonioni brushes them away.

"There, Jeanne, you say, 'The weight of all these years on one's shoulders'. Then you sink down." Jeanne Moreau, who is playing in both French and Italian, smokes one cigarette after another. Throughout the night, the atmosphere stays very quiet.

Four-thirty in the morning, and suddenly it gets cold. They all look tired, ill, as they pull on boots and jerseys and go out

again to the park. The grass is shiny with dew. Jeanne Moreau, bare-shouldered in a black crêpe dress, is sitting beside Mastroianni. He kisses her, pulls her down on to the sand.

Antonioni asks everyone to move away. Then, and exceptionally, he gives Jeanne Moreau an indication of the psychology of the scene . . . "He kisses her. She kisses him, but it's out of pity; for him, for herself, for their love. She thinks he's understood her and feels the same way. But, once again, they're at odds with each other. He wants to sleep with her, like men who think this is the way to set everything right. When she understands this, she resists; she doesn't want that."

"Camera."

Antonioni kneels close to them on the ground. "I don't love you any more," says Jeanne, "and you no longer love me." "Be quiet," answers Mastroianni, as the light comes up.

"Basta così," says Antonioni. "Cut."

* * *

MICHÈLE MANCEAUX: *You were already 37 when you made Cronaca di un Amore in 1950. Could you tell me what you had done before that and how you came to the cinema?*

MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI: I was born at Ferrara, which is a lovely, quiet old town in the middle of the sort of flat landscape you see in *Il Grido*. I took my degree at the University of Bologna. During this time I interested myself in the theatre; we had set up a student company and put on plays. I produced Pirandello, Ibsen, and even a play I'd written myself—terrible! In fact, I had been attracted to the theatre since I was a child. One year, in the country, some of my friends and I built a little theatre and put on some absurd show. I suppose I was about twelve. My job was to make thunder noises by rolling rocks down a gulley behind the stage. They fell with a noise that echoed in the channel, at the bottom of which ran a stream. I loved this deep and mysterious noise. I made thunder noises all through the show . . .

The first time I ever went behind a camera (it was a 16 mm. Bell and Howell) was in a lunatic asylum. I was determined to shoot a real-life documentary, that's to say with actual patients, and was so insistent that at last the hospital director let me try it. We put the camera in place, set up the lights, and disposed the patients about the room as we wanted them for the first shot. I ought to say that they were touchingly obedient and very careful to do nothing wrong. Finally, I ordered the lights to be switched on. It was rather a moving moment for me. Suddenly the room was blazing with light: for a second the patients stayed motionless, almost petrified, and I've never seen on any actor's face quite such expressions of overwhelming terror . . . But that lasted only a moment, and the rest of it was almost indescribable. They tried desperately to shield themselves against the light, as though it were some kind of prehistoric monster attacking them. Their expressions were disintegrated, devastated. Now, of course, we were the petrified ones. The cameraman hadn't the strength even to shut off the motor and I wasn't up to giving any kind of order. It was the hospital director, at last, who shouted out, "Stop! Cut the lights!" And in the half-darkness we saw bodies grovelling and shivering as though in agony.

Wasn't this experience enough to put you off film-making?

Not a bit. But it's a scene I've never forgotten. It was then, though without being aware of it, that we began to talk of neo-realism. After the war, when these films became fashionable, I often thought of this documentary—which was never made—as a sort of classic text . . . I felt this even more when I made my first film, *Gente del Po*, in 1943.

. . . I had come to Rome in 1940, on a job connected with the big International Exhibition which was planned for 1942, and which, of course, never took place. This job didn't last long, and during this period I was often really hungry. I remember that I stole a piece of meat once, and I'm not ashamed to admit it . . . Later, I became editor of the magazine *Cinema* and also worked as assistant to Rossellini

on his film *Un Pilota Ritorna*. In 1942 I went to France, as assistant to Carné on *Les Visiteurs du Soir*. I was called up and had to go back to Italy as soon as the film was finished, and I suppose my career might have taken quite a different course if I'd been able to stay in France.

After that I did some work as assistant both to Visconti and De Santis and wrote some scripts, including Fellini's *Lo Sciecco Bianco*. And in 1947 I finally managed to get together the footage I'd shot for *Gente del Po*, which hadn't been possible before because of the post-war division of Italy. When I got the negative, I was bitterly distressed to find that half was missing: a 2,000 ft. documentary was reduced to only 1,000 feet. But let me be a little presumptuous for a moment: this short really did go some way towards anticipating the neo-realist films. Up to then, documentary directors in my country had concentrated on places, objects, works of art. But my film was about sailors and fishermen and daily life . . . about people.

In 1948 I made my second documentary, *N.U.*, which was about street-cleaners. Then I made some others, and was awarded some prizes. And finally, in 1950, I found someone in Turin who was prepared to finance a feature for me. I suggested the subject of *Cronaca di un Amore*, and although he didn't much like the sound of it he invited me to come and see him. I suppose the hours I spent talking to him in his hotel room were some of the most difficult in my life, especially since I'm not by nature a talker. I talked altogether for four or five hours, without much real idea of how he was reacting or what effect I was making. At last he told me that he still didn't think much of the subject, but he could see what I felt about it and that was good enough.

Do you feel that there's a line of progression in your own work, from Cronaca di un Amore to L'Avventura and La Notte? What are you moving towards?



That's a very difficult question, and I'm tempted to answer: I just make films, and that's that. I don't feel, in any case, that the things a director has to say about his own work really go very far towards illuminating it . . . and in my own case, I know enough about myself to know that anything I said would just define a particular moment or state of mind, or throw a certain light on the imaginative process. Here, you should be able to say, I remember such and such motives . . . nothing more. An artist's line of development, I think, is something that comes about unconsciously.

My feeling, too, is that films aren't "understood" simply by spying out their content. You have to ask much more of a film—or something different. But I suppose there is always a kind of lowest common denominator in my films, or at least in the best of them. It's an analysis of the sentiments, as they are today. I think *La Notte* will probably end this analysis and I may follow it with something quite different.

Which of your own films satisfies you most?

Apart from *La Notte*, and of course I can't judge that yet, I would say that *L'Avventura* is the best . . . Superficially, this film may look like a rather complicated and perhaps mysterious love story. During a holiday trip, a girl disappears; and the fact of this disappearance creates a gap which is immediately filled by other factors. For the missing girl's fiancé and her friend, the search becomes a kind of sentimental journey, at the end of which they've reached a new and unforeseen situation. On one level, it could be a kind of thriller, with enough sophistication and enough weight to the characters to give it the pseudo-dignity of the psychological thriller.

Well, there are elements of that in the story construction. But *L'Avventura* has other ambitions . . . Not towards a message but, more humbly, a demonstration. I wanted to show that sentiments which convention and rhetoric have encouraged us to regard as having a kind of definite weight and absolute duration, can in fact be fragile, vulnerable, subject to change. Man deceives himself when he hasn't courage enough to allow for new dimensions in emotional matters—his loves, regrets, states of mind—just as he allows for them in the field of science and technology.

Well, what's to be done? *L'Avventura* naturally does not pretend to have the answer to the disturbing questions it raises. It's enough for me to have posed them in cinematic terms.

Why do you use only natural settings?

Because I find them the most stimulating. It's rather like telling a painter, "Here's this wall, so long and so high, which you have to cover with frescoes." Limitations of this sort help the imagination much more than they constrict it. There's another reason as well. I am interested in the relationship between the internal space and the external space of a setting. In reality one cannot exist without the other, and in fact the second often conditions the first. It's a natural circumstance which one can't ignore. It's true that on the set you can construct interior and exterior as you please. But for me something is missing, an occasional quality of reality, perhaps even a particular light. In a sense, I can say that to direct in a natural setting is to continue writing the film.

Sometimes you transform your natural decor, work over it and select from it so that it looks like something it isn't . . .

Yes, that's true. But this has to do with a temptation I'm always giving way to, whether it's in someone's office or a private house or even my own home. I'll be talking to someone and suddenly, during the conversation, I'll begin to feel uncomfortable. Somehow we seem badly placed in the scene. We may be sitting next to each other, for instance, and I feel we should be facing one another, or perhaps I'd rather have a window than a wall behind him . . . When I'm shooting a

Antonioni and Monica Vitti aboard a launch headed for "L'Avventura's" island location.



"La Notte": Marcello Mastroianni and Monica Vitti.

film I do no more than this: I manoeuvre objects and people as they seem to go best.

How important are the actors to you? Are they simply objects to be manipulated as the situation demands?

A very important element in the action, but one which I need to have entirely in my own hands. During rehearsals I never get very close to the actors. Instinctively, I would want to treat them badly, to consider them as individuals only to the extent to which they're useful to the film. For this reason, I explain as little as possible what I think about the characters they're playing or the scene they're just about to shoot. In effect, I try to direct them not so much through their intelligence as through their nerves and instincts. I want them rather to lose control of themselves—though without being aware of it—and to get down, as it were, to the raw material. The important thing then is to select and assemble the right expressions. That's the difficult part about this system . . . if you can really call it a system.

You know Robert Bresson's films? He's another director who doesn't want his players to "act".

I know Bresson's films and think very highly of them. But my own feeling is not that actors ought not to act, only that they ought to act with the least possible lucidity. What I want to avoid is actors becoming their own directors.

You often work with non-professionals. Do you choose them because they can represent the characters rather than because they are good actors?

Yes, quite often. Some of the small parts in *La Notte* are played by people who have never acted before, not even in school productions, and they are very good. On the other hand, there are times when one must have good professional actors to develop certain characters. As I said, it has to do with using them in a certain way.

Watching you at work, I was very struck by the way in which you supervise the smallest details. You leave nothing to chance, and yet your films are not entirely realistic. How do you reconcile this very precise method and the sort of atmosphere you get?

Why should I leave things to chance? Nothing in a work of art comes about by accident . . . Moreover, chance has never worked well for me. From the moment when it inspires us, in any case, the real becomes our number one enemy. And, too, isn't it really you French critics who've chosen this expression "interior realism" to describe my work?

How big a part does improvisation play in your films?

Generally I come to work without knowing exactly what I'm going to shoot. I ask the members of the company to leave me alone, and for about fifteen or thirty minutes I'm by myself. This is the time when I resolve my various problems, and I suppose you might say that I'm virtually inventing a little piece of film.

The women in your films are generally free and aware of what they are doing, often initiating action on their own account. This doesn't seem to reflect the usual Italian attitude towards women. Would you say that, if the women were more submissive, there

wouldn't be this kind of break-down in relationships?

No, I don't think that this is the reason why relations between men and women are liable to deteriorate so easily. It's more of a natural process, and it isn't particularly the fault of society. The world is changing very quickly, and why should we be surprised that human psychology and the mechanics of sentiment are changing as well?

Do you regard your own heroes as particularly weak men?

Perhaps. But the important thing is that they should be strong as characters.

But aren't they, for the most part, men who have renounced their work?

A man who renounces something is also a man who believes in something . . .

All the same, my impression is that you are more indulgent to women. You generally allow them more strength than your male characters. In *Le Amiche*, for instance, it's Clelia who takes the decision to leave the man.

But in *L'Avventura* the woman is no less weak than the man . . . In any case, I don't feel that this word "weak" is really the right one. We're living in an impasse. Is it weak to try to get out of it, even if, for the moment, you lose the battle?

Le Amiche was an adaptation from a novel by Pavese. What do you feel about adaptations generally and do you think that they are a proper thing for the cinema?

I don't think there is any problem here. When you read a novel or story and think about it in film terms, what matters is what there is in the story that strikes off completely new possibilities. You take the narrated incidents as a living reality, that is, and this constitutes your new point of departure. What is left of a story by Bandello in Shakespeare? Absolutely nothing. And, on my own account, I was never particularly troubled by considerations of remaining faithful to Pavese's novel.

Is there any writer whom you particularly admire?

Of course. I imagine everyone has a favourite writer. You always become aware of coincidences between your own experiences and personal reflections and what you read. There's a period in which Stendhal gets you, a period when Gide gets you, when Malraux gets you, when Musil gets you . . . Something certainly stays with us from this reading; it is part of the cultural baggage to which we cling, more or less

unconsciously and at the most unlikely moments. I've enjoyed reading Conrad immensely, for instance, but I could never make a film from one of his novels.

But you might one day make a Conradian film?

Perhaps. But that would be something for the critics to judge, not for me.

How is it that you are almost the only Italian director whose work strikes one as entirely secular? There's almost always a whiff of religion in Italian films, but one never senses it in your work.

Do you think this is a failing or a virtue?

For me, a virtue.

My impression is that people abroad are very badly informed about Italian questions. You aren't probably aware that there has been a kind of Jansenist tradition in Italy. And if it is true that I'm a secular artist, it's also true that I'm part of a cultural tradition, both in literature and in the cinema. Svevo, for instance, was a secular writer; so was Pavese. The Italian silent and pre-war cinemas were secular. There has always been this minority in Italy. So I would say, simply, that if I am a secular artist I'm not some kind of freak or monster. If I seem isolated in our cinema, it may be because in our surroundings opportunism is almost a habit of mind. I don't, of course, mean to deny that some artists, and the best of them, are entirely sincere. There's an authentic Catholic nostalgia in Fellini's work and even in Rossellini's; and in the films of De Sica and Zavattini there is always hope, or at least there is not that compulsion to look pitilessly right to the bottom, which is a characteristic secular trait.

It seems to me that there is one recurring theme in all your films: the impossibility of fidelity.

Fidelity is linked to the sentiments, and I've already said what I feel about those questions. It's a vicious circle. If the sentiments are fragile . . . But, please, I don't want to begin the interview all over again.

5 FILMS

by RICHARD ROUD

IN FRANCE AND ITALY, Michelangelo Antonioni has always been a minority taste; in England, with the exception of *Le Amiche*, his films are unknown. But, just as the success of Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* and *A Man Escaped* finally focused attention here on his earlier *Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, so, one hopes, the triumph of *L'Avventura* may lead to an interest in Antonioni's earlier films. A forthcoming season at the National Film Theatre will perhaps reveal to many that *L'Avventura* was not simply an isolated achievement. Certainly it represents an opening out of Antonioni's world; but his earlier films display perhaps a greater degree of formal organisation, as well as a view of the world significantly different from that expressed in *L'Avventura*.

Antonioni's first feature, *Cronaca di un Amore* (*Chronicle of a Love*) was made in 1950: as with all his films, except *Le Amiche*, he not only directed the picture but was also responsible for its subject and screenplay. Unlike the first works of many directors (Bresson, for example), *Cronaca di un Amore* can be seen today not only as a fully realised work but also as a virtually complete definition of Antonioni's artistic personality and technique. Significantly, it ran counter to the neo-realist method then prevailing in Italy. As Antonioni declared, his

Lucia Bosè and Massimo Girotti, the lovers in "*Cronaca di un Amore*".



own interest would have been in the mind and emotions of a man whose bicycle has been stolen, whilst De Sica and Zavattini had chosen rather to portray the man in terms of the stolen bicycle. Nor is the film concerned with the unemployed and the homeless: it is set largely in the milieu of the rich Milan industrialists—gala performances at La Scala, smart cafés and night clubs. While the neo-realists were using non-professional actors, the habitués of this world are played by professionals (Lucia Bosè and Massimo Girotti) and their problems are personal and tortuous.

A young couple, Paola and Guido, have been separated by their feelings of guilt over the fate of a fellow student, Giovanna, whose accidental but wished-for death they might have prevented. Seven years later, Paola's husband engages private detectives because he suspects that she has a lover. In fact his suspicions are false, but the investigations prompt a renewal of her relations with Guido. They plot to kill her husband, but he too dies accidentally—distracted after learning of their affair, he runs his car into a ditch. But this second "accident" separates the lovers once more, this time for ever.

The subject of *Cronaca di un Amore* is not, however, completely private in nature. Antonioni is a man of the left and certain social preoccupations make themselves felt in this film. Guido's studies were interrupted by the war and he has since been forced to earn his living as a car salesman. When he suggests to Paola that she leave her husband, her ironic glance at his packet of Nazionali cigarettes is warning enough that she cannot accept a life without luxury. Throughout all Antonioni's work, one finds unsentimental illustrations of his belief that the emotions are often conditioned by social factors and tastes. At the end of *Le Amiche*, for example, Clelia refuses to marry the workman who loves her. She has made a life for herself in the *haute couture* world of Turin and is unwilling to slip back to the slums of her childhood; for she, like Claudia in *L'Avventura*, is really an outsider in the world of wealth.

Whenever Antonioni's social preoccupations gain the upper hand, however, his work seems to suffer. *I Vinti* (*The Vanquished*), for example, deals with delinquent youth in France, Italy and England. From the opening sequence, consisting of a montage of newspaper headlines and newsreel shots, we are aware that Antonioni has attempted to treat "the problem". As a result, and in spite of some remarkable and beautiful sequences, the individual conflicts presented in the course of the three episodes seem to have struck no profound response from him, perhaps because these problems are not central to his essential concerns. A young Italian of good family gets mixed up in cigarette smuggling; a young English poet tries to achieve the perfect murder; a French adolescent kills a friend for no valid reason. Each episode was filmed in its respective country (Peter Reynolds and Fay Compton played in the English section) and the original version was in three languages. But, beyond a general suggestion that the adolescents have unsuitable home lives, there is no attempt to show *why* the Italian, for instance, has gone into the smuggling racket. If Antonioni had taken any one of the three episodes and allowed himself to develop it fully, then perhaps the film might have avoided the impression of a perfunctory enquiry. A generalised concern for social problems, however praiseworthy in the abstract, is not enough to make a convincing film.

One can speculate that Antonioni felt impelled to make *I Vinti* after *Cronaca di un Amore* in an attempt to satisfy that side of him which is genuinely concerned with immediate social issues—and that *Le Amiche* was followed by *Il Grido* for similar reasons. *Il Grido* (*The Cry*) is a working-class



Above: street-sweepers in Antonioni's documentary "N.U." (1948). Centre: Lucia Bosè, reduced to playing in desert extravaganzas at the end of "Signora senza Camelie" (1953). Below: Valentina Cortese, Yvonne Furneaux and Eleanora Rossi Drago, the three friends in "Le Amiche" (1955).

drama set in the bleak and misty Po valley, far from the elegant quarters of Turin in which *Le Amiche* was filmed. It suffers to some extent from the fact that it is difficult to believe in Alida Valli, Betsy Blair or Steve Cochran as working-class Italians; and, in so far as their social setting is concerned, they remain characters viewed too much from the outside. Antonioni apparently did a great deal of research to determine just how a worker would react when he finds out that his mistress is leaving him, but no amount of assiduous questioning can make up for the lack of real familiarity or artistic knowledge. *Il Grido*, however, remains one of Antonioni's most important films because, this time, its problems and theme are central to his artistic and human personality.

In the words of Scott Fitzgerald, one of his favourite authors, Antonioni lives permanently in the world of three o'clock in the morning, the real dark night of the soul. It is a world of suicide and despair, a world in which passions are real but transient, in which guilt and remorse are permanent and inescapable and one is held to account as much for what one has allowed to happen as for what one has done: a world that is grey and cold, hard and spare, and where the sun rarely shines. *L'Avventura* marks a lightening of this outlook, and it remains to be seen whether *La Notte* will return to it.

Guido and Paola, in *Cronaca di un Amore*, are haunted by the memory that they could have saved Giovanna's life, but it is precisely this shared guilt which ineluctably drives them into the plot to kill Paola's husband and as inevitably separates them after his death. In *Il Grido*, Irma's decision to leave Aldo, with whom she has lived for seven years, destroys him utterly. He cannot understand how, having loved him, she can now fail to love him. So he goes off, taking their young daughter, and wanders around the countryside trying to find a new meaning and centre for his life. He tries to settle down with

various girls but is irresistibly drawn back to the town where he and Irma lived together, around which he has circled ever more despairingly. When he does finally return, when he sees Irma again, he realises that suicide is for him the only solution.

Le Amiche begins with an attempted suicide and finishes with an achieved one. Between these two acts is inscribed a world of boredom, the metaphysical boredom of the rich, who, their material problems solved, are faced with the futility of existence, the "*difficulté d'être*." In a sense *Le Amiche* can be seen as a first sketch for *L'Avventura*. The social surroundings are the same and the bored and restless Momina, whose only distraction is in her love affairs, is a draft for the Giulia of *L'Avventura*.

La Signora senza Camelie (*Camille without Camellias*) is set in the milieu of the cinema. A young shop girl becomes a star and drifts into marriage with her producer. Like the title of one of her films, she is the *Donna senza Destino*: her fate is always to make the wrong decisions because she is in a false position. As in the plays of Pirandello, which she begins to study in her attempt to make herself a "real" actress, her problem is one of identity. She is never the girl for the role. Too sensitive for a starlet, too inexperienced and untalented for an actress, too unsophisticated for her husband's world, too sincere for the kind of extra-marital adventures she gets mixed up with, she finally resigns herself to acting in fifth-rate extravaganzas like *The Slave of the Sphinx* and consoling herself with fifth-rate Don Juans like her lover, Nardo. Like Momina in *Le Amiche*, she has chosen her own, less violent form of suicide.

* * *

A view of life, a personality, are defined in the themes Antonioni chooses, but they find their complete expression in the form of his films. His preoccupation with the influence of

"Il Grido" (1957). "... the desolate autumnal wastes of the Po valley."



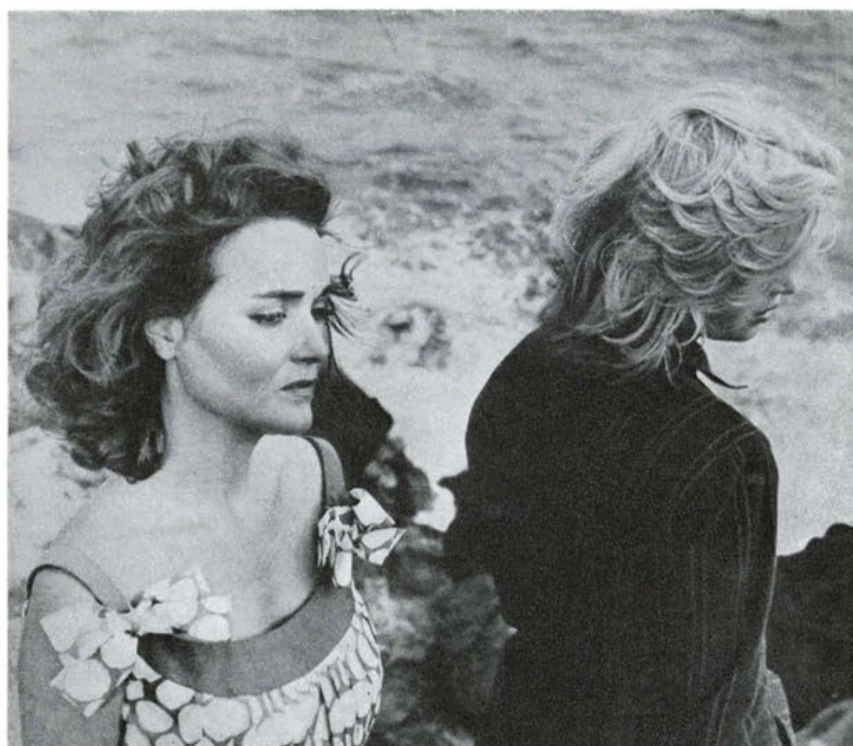
environment (both social and physical) can be seen from his consistent and exclusive use of natural settings. His characters are always seen against a real background. Yet these natural locations have been chosen, with as much care as any studio set was ever designed, to express the mood of the film and the emotions of the characters. The desolate autumnal wastes of the Po Valley through which Aldo aimlessly circles in *Il Grido*, the oppressive presence of the horizon, the perspectives which open on to infinity, are the exact reflection of Aldo's state of soul; and, one might add, of Antonioni's. In his best films, one always feels that Antonioni's characters are expressions of himself. And this is what gives his work its unity.

The rain-swept wastes of Cinecittà, its pre-fabricated buildings with their peeling stucco, are the background for Clara's final renunciation in *Signora senza Camelie*. The smart, French-looking arcades of Turin reflect the ordered and elegant life which Clelia refuses to surrender in *Le Amiche*. The lonely stretches of highway and the sordid hotel rooms to which Paola and Guido are forced to repair are deliberately contrasted in *Cronaca di un Amore* with the chic bars, the luxury of Paola's home and the slightly sinister elegance of her clothes.

I cannot recall a single instance in which Antonioni uses a real close-up. He never isolates a character entirely from his surroundings. Rather, he prefers to use the two-shot combined with long takes (the scene on the bridge near the end of *Cronaca di un Amore* runs four minutes), action within the shot and a great many tracking and panning movements. His concomitant rejection of cutting within a sequence further emphasises the relationship of one character to another. His camera constantly follows his people, literally tracking them down. "I need to follow my characters," he says, "beyond the moments conventionally considered important for the spectator; to show them even when everything appears to have been said." Like Renoir and Welles, both of whom he greatly admires, he makes much use of composition in depth, though the effect he most often achieves is not to link the two or three people in the frame but to separate them, to demonstrate the gulfs existing between them. For the same reason, in his two-shots, the actors seldom look directly at each other. This is especially true of *Il Grido*, in which the whole drama springs from Aldo's inability to communicate. Every shot is full of diagonal lines which never cross; every character has his own problems and is incapable of helping any of the others. Every man is an island.

In the same way that Antonioni uses composition in depth to isolate his characters from each other, so his use of real exteriors, two-shots, long takes and tracking movements dissociates his characters from their backgrounds. There is an essential dialectic at work here: people are seen against authentic backgrounds which relate directly to their states of mind and feeling, but at the same time they are necessarily alienated from their surroundings, apart, separate and alone. The same sort of effect occurs in Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, which, Antonioni admits, greatly stimulated his own imagination. Everyday surroundings, that is, have either been highly stylised (the interiors and costumes of *Cronaca di un Amore*) or shot with great formalism (*Il Grido*) in order to bring out the eternal and non-adventitious nature of the drama. And the striking result is both an expressive and an abstract use of setting, both working dialectically to create an extraordinarily complex pictorial and dramatic structure.

But there is another element at work in these films: an autonomous and non-functional use of camera movements to create spatial patterns which are satisfying in their own right. There is a scene in *Signora senza Camelie* which perhaps brings this out best. Clara has come home to find that her husband has taken an overdose of sleeping tablets. As she enters their living room, the camera describes a clockwise elliptical movement. This movement is answered by a corresponding counter-clockwise movement at the end of the sequence as we leave the house. No dramatic point has been made by these



"L'Avventura": Dominique Blanchard and Monica Vitti.

two movements: the effect is as gratuitous as when a theme is reversed in a fugue, and it is similarly divorced from any emotional significance. Or so it seems. I would say that Antonioni is the kind of artist who is incapable of doing anything clumsily. Beauty is for him an absolute necessity even in such relatively unimportant matters as getting a camera into a room and out again. He is proposing to us an additional, non-representational element for our pleasure: a formal choreography of movements which accompanies the film, providing a non-conceptual figure in the carpet, an experience in pure form.

There are those, of course, to whom this may seem reprehensible, or indeed imaginary. But just as one can enjoy *The Musical Offering* without being aware of the underlying structural complexity and rigour, so an appreciation of Antonioni does not depend on an awareness of camera movements and all the rest. His achievement is to have created an essentially adult world, in which feelings are as complex, emotions as hazardous, problems as insoluble, as in life itself.

L'AVVENTURA

by PENELOPE HOUSTON

The conclusion at which my characters arrive is not moral anarchy. They come, at the most, to a kind of shared pity. This, you may say, is nothing new. But without that, what is left to us?—From Michelangelo Antonioni's press statement at the 1960 Cannes Festival.

TO SEE L'AVVENTURA at the London Festival was a revelation. At Cannes, at least during the second half, attention had to be agonisingly divided between the screen and one's neighbours. A long love scene set off a fusillade of angry jeering, and one wondered whose moral

susceptibilities were being outraged; a reiterated shot of a girl running down a corridor brought bellows of "cut"; and the last scene went through to derisive howls of "He's crying! Look, he's crying!" It was an ugly and unforgivable reception, compounded in about equal parts of moral indignation and boredom, and it effectively wrecked concentration by the rest of us. Certainly my own comments on *L'Avventura* did it two major injustices: it is not difficult or obscure, to an audience which keeps its head and its manners, and its second half is triumphantly sustained. It was the public, not the film, that got out of hand.

L'Avventura has been criticised here, infinitely more calmly, by people who feel that the weighting of the images is some sort of trickster's device. They, at least, are not going to let themselves be taken in by all that subtlety and fine shading. But one scarcely needs Antonioni's own statement of his intentions to realise that the film's purpose is deeply serious; nor should one have to ask a director who has chosen to place himself at the centre of his subject, to flood it with light slowly, gradually and from within, why he has not also stepped outside it to explain himself and his meaning.

Oblique comment is Antonioni's method, comment emerging through reactions, details, off-guard moments of self-awareness. His characters here inhabit a world in which elegance has been bought at the price of boredom. He does not devalue the elegance, he admits the allure of the merely fashionable, but the price tag is there for anyone to see. The little group of rich northerners, setting off on their Sicilian yachting weekend, share a large lassitude: a jigsaw puzzle and a flirtation, a stock of platitudes and a dry, jaded irony are the diversions and resources which will see them through. Anna, whose disappearance provides the axis on which the story pivots, is younger and more vulnerable. Dissatisfied and restless, she has a neurotic urge to put herself at the centre of every stage. To keep a friend waiting while she makes love to her fiancé; to invent a scare story about a shark; and finally to disappear, whether by suicide or a game which somehow turns serious—all her actions are in keeping. What actually happens to her is irrelevant; or, rather, appears implicit in the kind of person we have seen her to be.

The prologue and the island scenes take up the film's first hour. On the island, everything is alien: the holiday-makers are marooned in space and time. The images, of barren rocks, solitary figures, tangential encounters, the calm, bright sea of the long shots and the closer views of waves battering into narrow rock clefts, are composed and built up to suggest a melancholy isolation. Fear does not bring this brittle group together, but cuts each of them adrift. Antonioni's most characteristic shot (not only in these sequences) shows two people turned away from each other, talking over their shoulders, talking into space. To isolate a stylistic mannerism of this kind is to make it sound banal; in fact the images are never identical, and each carries its own relevance, its disturbing bleakness.

The sound of a ship's engine in the early morning, coming from everywhere and nowhere; the arrival of the helicopter, swooping down over the island, and of the pompous little boat bringing Anna's father, emphasise solitude. The island seems lonelier when its silence is broken. Out of this orchestration of sound track (both natural sounds and Giovanni Fusco's subtly exact score) and Aldo Scavarda's images, three island encounters stand out. One brings the group together, to look for a moment at a Greek vase which a diver has brought up from the sea. Attention slips, and the vase is dropped and shattered. A minute episode makes its glancing comment, on dulled responses and a carelessness which is destructive and unaware. Then there is the meeting between Claudia, trailing up from the boat with the books Anna left behind her, and Anna's father. To the father, the sight of a Bible means reassurance. A girl who reads the Bible cannot have killed herself. But the other book reveals more: Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*, the story of a relationship draining away

in weakness, pity, self-pity. The parallels between Fitzgerald's Dick Diver and Sandro, Anna's lover and later Claudia's, are there for the making. The third, crucial encounter is the one between Sandro and Claudia after their restless night on the island. Friction changes to recognition, awareness; and the film swings away from Anna into this new relationship.

Away from the island, the group—Patrizia (Esmeralda Ruspoli), with her fine art of indolence, the tired cynic Corrado (James Addams) and his sly and silly wife (Dominique Blanchar)—coalesces again. The search for Anna is left to Sandro and Claudia; and it is only now that the film cuts its main characters out from the group and makes it clear that this is not to be Anna's story. Sandro is an architect who has surrendered purpose and ambition to a boring but profitable partnership. Claudia, one gathers, has been a bit of a hanger-on in Anna's world: less well-off, less sure of herself, the old school friend to be gently patronised. The sense of guilt, of betrayal and injustice to Anna, is Claudia's. But at every turn the journey through Sicily throws up reminders of Sandro's self-betrayal. There is the deserted village where they stop the car, a dismal outcrop of post-war suburban architecture on a Sicilian plateau, a place where no one has ever lived. Here again, it is a sound out of nowhere—a car engine creeping up to an empty piazza—which pin-points the mood. Later, the baroque facade of Noto matches the shift to a richer emotionalism. And the scene follows in which Sandro explicitly confronts his own discontent. Deliberately sending a trail of ink over an architectural drawing, he betrays his past and his profession with the petulant gesture of the born spoiler.

Before this episode, however, the balance has again shifted. A love scene has been followed by a return of guilt as Claudia, waiting in a village street, is surrounded by the avidly staring Sicilian crowd and revolts against this crude sexual inspection. Above ground level, in the bell-tower where a casual tug sets the bells ringing and the answering bells sounding from another campanile, tension dissolves into a kind of wonder. This is exact and right; the moment marks Claudia's imaginative surrender. A slightly later scene, when a rock'n'roll record blaring from a street loudspeaker sets Claudia prancing and miming to the music, needs an absurd, spontaneous gaiety which defies Antonioni's taut discipline. His humour is drier than this, and here he can only show us Claudia through Sandro's eyes, making rather a charming fool of herself.

The final scenes, set in a crowded and expensive hotel at Taormina, bring back the social perspective, friends, professional ties. Claudia alone is still caught up in the adventure. Waking during the night, finding Sandro missing, she moves from exhilaration to boredom to a despair which revives her self-doubt. The sequence ends with her sprawled on the floor, counting the seconds off on her watch, scribbling the numbers down on a picture magazine opened (another allusion?) at a story about Jean Harlow. Her prowling through the hotel at dawn, across the empty rooms with their overnight litter of glasses and bottles and choked ash-trays, ends in her discovery of Sandro and the floosie with whom he has spent the night. The verdict is less in Claudia's sickened dismay than in Sandro's face. For what it is worth, he knows himself; knows his fatal instinct for self-betrayal.

So to the end: the hotel terrace at dawn, the cold early morning light of the island repeated, Sandro's breakdown and Claudia's gesture of pity. The betrayers can come together only in weakness.

* * *

Breaking into three distinct sections—*island, search, the hotel*—*L'Avventura* uses each one to advance a little deeper. We are not given an easy thread to hold on to at the outset, when the first time you see the film you are entitled to suppose that Anna is at its centre. So, in a sense, she is: in the fact of her presence and the blank space in the puzzle left by her absence. Lea Massari, truculent, wilful, marked out for destruction, is replaced, as in a superimposition, by Monica Vitti, at once more diffident and more balanced, more open to

gaiety and more perplexed by conscience. This is a beautiful performance. Gabriele Ferzetti's Sandro is necessarily lightweight, since his surrender belongs to the past; he has moved away from the point of decision, and it would be disloyalty to the character to suggest that Sandro still has the makings of a hero. Dominique Blanchard's sly, invincibly silly Giulia and Esmeralda Ruspoli's monumentally bored Patrizia are variations on characters already met in *Le Amiche*. Antonioni recognises the damage they can do, though one suspects he finds it easy to forgive them.

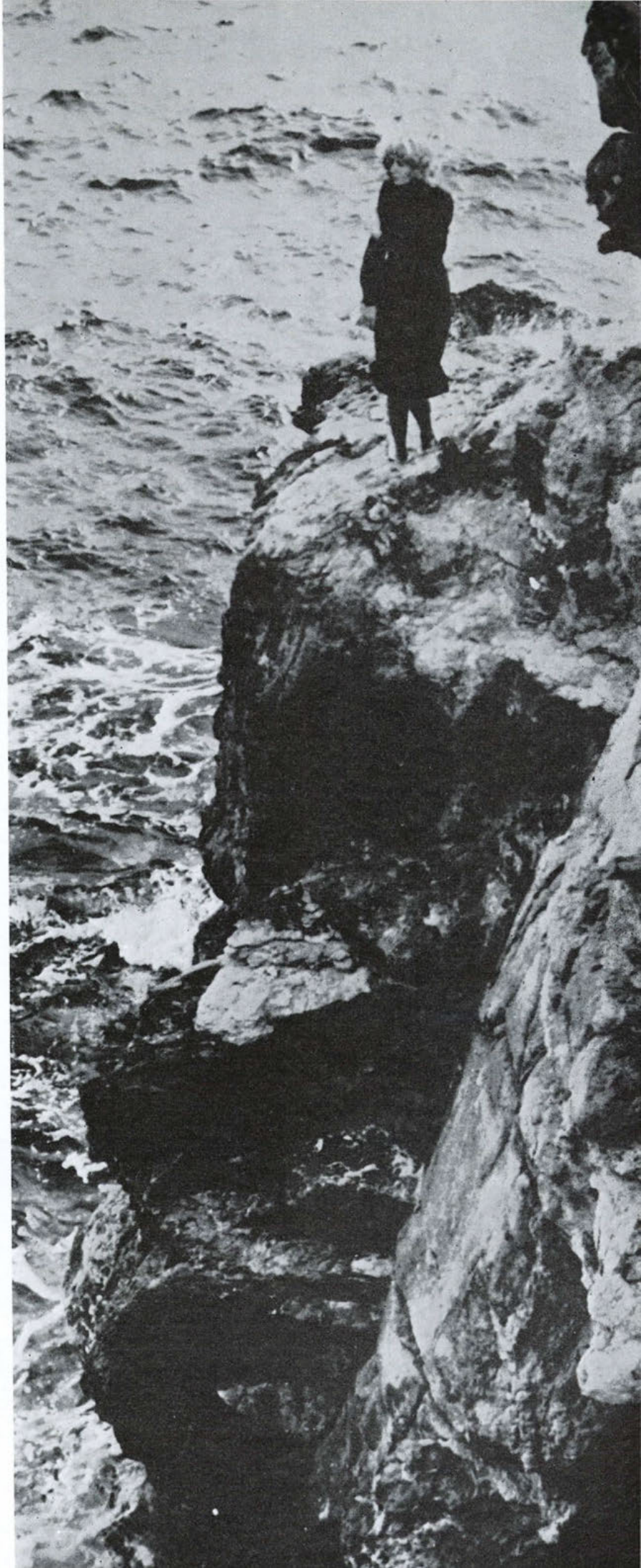
He is not engaging here in overt social criticism, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the way the hotel scene is presented. With well-bred revulsion, mockery held firmly in check, he watches the international rich spending their money. One can imagine, say, a Fellini version of the same setting, with every comment explicit and disgust spilling over into rage. In retrospect, perhaps, it is the way in which every episode, almost every location, has been fined down, assimilated to the service of his theme, which most stamps the director. Shooting entirely on location, in hotel rooms, villas, a chugging little island train, Antonioni composes his shots as though he had all the time he needed to manipulate every object. His world is insulated, refined, because within its boundaries every detail is to be pinned down. This is not an "evocative" style, which usually means evocative of nothing in particular, but an uncommonly exact one.

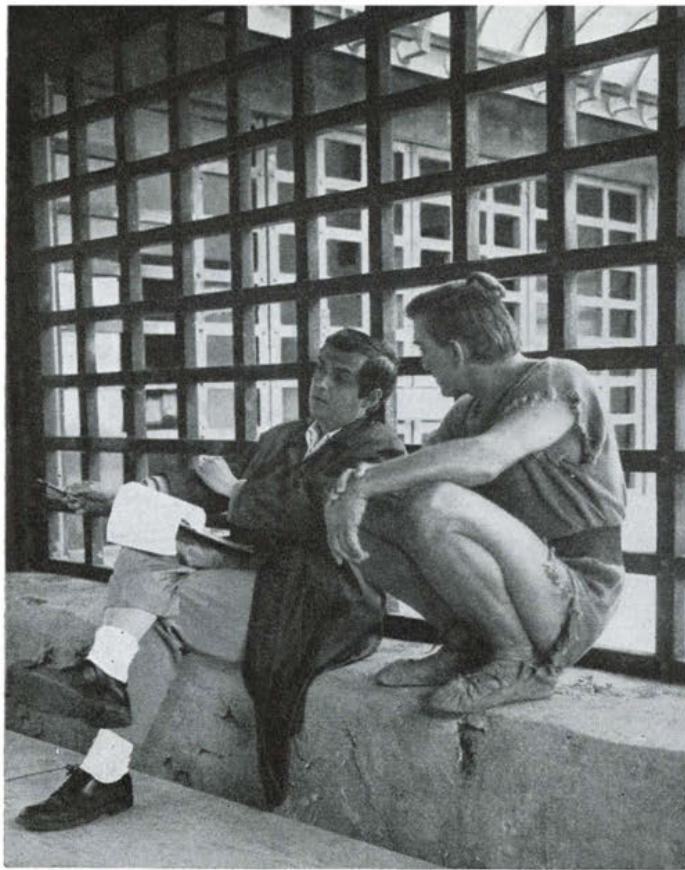
There is wide suspicion at present of the rarefied atmosphere, in which the air is a little thin for easy breathing and the ghosts of Charles Morgan's cerebral passions hover at one's shoulder. One ought to remember, though, that a plain statement is not necessarily either more true or more valuable than a subtle and complex one, only a little easier to grasp. Antonioni is a withdrawn but not a cold film-maker, and within his gravity and formalism there is room for acute, amused observation. Take, for instance, the revealing distinction between Sandro's indulgent amusement and Claudia's richer enjoyment of the absurd overheard conversation on the train; or the cruelly complete little summing-up of a relationship in the episode with the chemist and his wife. The subtleties are not decoration but essence: a director cannot become an Antonioni merely by shooting dialogue scenes in which the characters never meet face to face.

On the screen Antonioni leaves us, as in a novel, to find our own solution to the personal equation he sets. He is exploring the failure of his characters to live up to a conventional standard of morality, or to possibilities within themselves. A situation catches them unawares and their instinctive reaction is betrayal: by the end, Claudia has travelled so far from friendship that she can only dread the possibility of Anna's return, and Sandro has disclosed all his weaknesses in turn. Whatever future they have will be haunted by these few days. One thinks of the conclusion of another story of betrayal, Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*: "We shall never be again as we were."

In written statements Antonioni has gone further, generalising to make the explanations he felt necessary after the Cannes public's baffled hostility. Men, he says, are "sick of love", and the corruption cannot be cured without some fundamental change in moral attitudes. What change, what "new dimensions", what stages of advance towards a healthier morality does he envisage? Within the boundaries of his own work, his characters are led to suicide (*Il Grido*, *Le Amiche*, possibly Anna here) or to a sad stoicism. The "analysis of the sentiments as they are today" is the artist's business, and there is no sentimental conclusion. Perhaps the final image we should have of this reserved, grave, deeply concerned film-maker is of a moralist in search of a moral code he can believe in.

"L'Avventura": Monica Vitti.





Stanley Kubrick is at present in Britain, filming "Lolita" at the ABPC Studios. Here he talks to Kirk Douglas on the set of "Spartacus".

words and movies

STANLEY KUBRICK

THE PERFECT NOVEL FROM which to make a movie is, I think, not the novel of action but, on the contrary, the novel which is mainly concerned with the inner life of its characters. It will give the adaptor an absolute compass bearing, as it were, on what a character is thinking or feeling at any given moment of the story. And from this he can invent action which will be an objective correlative of the book's psychological content, will accurately dramatise this in an implicit, off-the-nose way without resorting to having the actors deliver literal statements of meaning.

I think that for a movie or a play to say anything really truthful about life, it has to do so very obliquely, so as to avoid all pat conclusions and neatly tied-up ideas. The point of view it is conveying has to be completely entwined with a sense of life as it is, and has to be got across through a subtle injection into the audience's consciousness. Ideas which are valid and truthful are so multi-faceted that they don't yield themselves to frontal assault. The ideas have to be discovered by the audience, and their thrill in making the discovery makes those ideas all the more powerful. You use the audience's thrill of surprise and discovery to reinforce your ideas, rather than reinforce them artificially through plot points or phoney drama or phoney stage dynamics put in to power them across.

It's sometimes said that a great novel makes a less promising basis for a film than a novel which is merely good. I don't think that adapting great novels presents any special problems

which are not involved in adapting good novels or mediocre novels; except that you will be more heavily criticised if the film is bad, and you may be even if it's good. I think almost any novel can be successfully adapted, provided it is not one whose aesthetic integrity is lost along with its length. For example, the kind of novel in which a great deal and variety of action is absolutely essential to the story, so that it loses much of its point when you subtract heavily from the number of events or their development.

People have asked me how it is possible to make a film out of *Lolita* when so much of the quality of the book depends on Nabokov's prose style. But to take the prose style as any more than just a part of a great book is simply misunderstanding just what a great book is. Of course, the quality of the writing is one of the elements that make a novel great. But this quality is a result of the quality of the writer's obsession with his subject, with a theme and a concept and a view of life and an understanding of character. Style is what an artist uses to fascinate the beholder in order to convey to him his feelings and emotions and thoughts. These are what have to be dramatised, not the style. The dramatising has to find a style of its own, as it will do if it really grasps the content. And in doing this it will bring out another side of that structure which has gone into the novel. It may or may not be as good as the novel; sometimes it may in certain ways be even better.

Oddly enough, acting comes into the picture somewhere here. At its best, realistic drama consists of a progression of moods and feelings that play upon the audience's feelings and transform the author's meaning into an emotional experience. This means that the author must not think of paper and ink and words as being his writing tools, but rather that he works in flesh and feeling. And in this sense I feel that too few writers seem to understand what an actor can communicate emotionally and what he cannot. Often, at one point, the writer expects a silent look to get across what it would take a rebus puzzle to explain, and in the next moment the actor is given a long speech to convey something that is quite apparent in the situation and for which a brief look would be sufficient. Writers tend to approach the creation of drama too much in terms of words, failing to realise that the greatest force they have is the mood and feeling they can produce in the audience through the actor. They tend to see the actor grudgingly, as someone likely to ruin what they have written, rather than seeing that the actor is in every sense their medium.

You might wonder, as a result of this, whether directing was anything more or less than a continuation of the writing. I think that is precisely what directing should be. It would follow, then, that a writer-director is really the perfect dramatic instrument; and the few examples we have where these two peculiar techniques have been properly mastered by one man have, I believe, produced the most consistently fine work.

When the director is not his own author, I think it is his duty to be one hundred per cent. faithful to the author's meaning and to sacrifice none of it for the sake of climax or effect. This seems a fairly obvious notion, yet how many plays and films have you seen where the experience was exciting and arresting but when it was over you felt there was less there than met the eye? And this is usually due to artificial stimulation of the senses by technique which disregards the inner design of the play. It is here that we see the cult of the director at its worst.

On the other hand, I don't want to imply rigidity. Nothing in making movies gives a greater sense of elation than participation in a process of allowing the work to grow, through vital collaboration between script, director and actors, as it goes along. Any art form properly practised involves a to and fro between conception and execution, the original intention being constantly modified as one tries to give it objective realisation. In painting a picture this goes on between the artist and his canvas; in making a movie it goes on between people.

In the Picture

Asta Nielsen

TORBEN VON RATH writes: Asta Nielsen, once known everywhere as "Die Asta", has just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of her first film, the Danish *Afgrunden* (*The Abyss*), which was first shown in Copenhagen on September 12th, 1910. Born in poverty, she was working at a Copenhagen bakery when she was fourteen and was still employed there when she became a student at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. Her talent was evident, but the Danish theatres were unable to give her the parts she wanted. She was twenty-nine when she first went in front of a film camera; and after her first film Danish and German studios were competing for her signature on contracts. She made only one more Danish film, *Den sorte Drom* (*The Black Dream*) before leaving for Germany and a contract with Deutsche Bioscop.

This company and later Union (which was to become UFA) made her world famous. Many of her films were directed by her husband, Urban Gad. In 1920 she played the lead in *Hamlet*, based not on Shakespeare but on an American historian's theory that Hamlet was a woman forcibly raised as a boy in order to succeed to the throne. Altogether, Asta Nielsen made seventy-eight films in Germany, the last of them being *Unlikely Love Affair* in 1932. She left the country, despite Hitler's invitation to her to form her own film company, in 1936.

Now living in retirement in Copenhagen, Asta Nielsen is still at work, writing occasional articles for the Danish press. In the last few months she has had television offers from Hamburg, Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Stockholm and Brussels; but has turned them down as she has all suggestions of a return to acting during the last twenty years. She has written short stories and two books based on her years in Germany. During the last couple of years she has also designed some remarkable collages, including a self-portrait.

In one direction, Asta Nielsen has been disappointed: she has made thirteen applications for a licence to run a cinema, but each time the Danish authorities have turned her application down. Perhaps they think of her only as a German film star . . . When I



Asta Nielsen: self-portrait.

recently asked her why she had chosen the cinema at a time when it was not really accepted as an art, her big, expressive eyes were full of humour: "Only to show Denmark that I was an actress, and all the world gave me the chance to prove that I was not wrong . . ." That beautiful face has become even more fascinating, and the years have preserved the tall, slim body which helped to create the fashions of the Twenties. At 79, Asta Nielsen is still "Die Asta".

Interview with Fred Zinnemann

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR writes: Of late Fred Zinnemann has been ranging more and more widely away from Hollywood for the locales of his films: to the Mid-West for *Oklahoma*, then New York for *A Hatful of Rain*, Cuba (briefly) for some work on *The Old Man and the Sea*, the Congo for *The Nun's Story*, Australia for *The Sundowners* and, next on the list, Hawaii, to re-create on the spot James A. Michener's monumental fictional history of the fiftieth state. But, he insisted on a recent visit to London for the first showings here of *The Sundowners*, individual people remain his paramount concern, and to him "the most exciting landscape is still the human face."

Did he recognise the division critics had felt in his work between the small-scale, small-budget, black and white films he had made before *From Here to Eternity* and the big, expensive colour films he had made since? No, he didn't really think so. Obviously the material resources involved in *The Nun's Story* and *The Sundowners* were greater, but in both cases this was a deliberate choice; the subjects had seized his interest on a human level, but he had felt that colour, wide screen and expensive locations were absolutely necessary to what he wanted to convey about these particular people. To be seen truly they must be seen in their true context; his Australians must inhabit an Australian Australia, or there would be no point in making the film, and his nuns, in the African scenes at least, must be seen against a real background, not a Hollywood substitute, however good. ("I wanted originally to do the convent scenes in black and white and the Congo scenes in colour," he said, "to point the difference in atmosphere, but I came to see that the device would be so obtrusive it would only spoil the effect.")

How about *Oklahoma*? "Well, I wanted to make it, but in retrospect I think I was misled by a great admiration for Oscar Hammerstein II and a great love for the show. I tried just to put the show intact on the screen, but this was quite the wrong approach." Did this mean he thought classics, at any level, best left alone by the film-maker? "No, not necessarily. I think it's all a matter of your



A scene from "Ganga", a new Bengali film about the Ganges fishermen.

own relationship to the work concerned. You have to be excited by it, but feel at home with it too. For instance, I think I could do *The Brothers Karamazov* well. I guess this sounds arrogant, but I don't mean to be; it's just that it's a classic which excites me but does not leave me in a state of reverence in which I wouldn't be able even to start adapting and rethinking."

We talked of other directors, and of the misfortunes of young Americans in having no training-ground equivalent to the old M-G-M shorts on which Zinnemann, Dassin and others were brought up. ("You know, I once made a film about a great Negro doctor which covered his life from birth in slavery to his death at ninety, all in ten minutes. You just had to be inventive to make anything at all of a subject like that, and it was by no means exceptional.") The name came up of one young director who had recently graduated from small independent productions to super-spectacle. "Ah, yes, there it is," said Mr. Zinnemann sadly. "Once you get caught in big productions you can't get out. There's no middle way these days..."

As we left, he was deep in the problem of how to make the older Chinese and Japanese Americans in *Hawaii* seem "different" (i.e. foreign) without making them seem "foreign" (i.e. non-human). This will be (inevitably with such a subject) a Big Picture, but again Zinnemann has a human subject which excites him and the size of the film is a matter of choice rather than economic necessity. If he is a captive of big productions, he seems a happy captive—as long, anyway, as he can reveal a little humanity at the heart of even the largest screen.

Notes from Calcutta

VISHNU DEY writes: The Bengali film is becoming more dramatic, more complex and more distinctively Bengali. Audiences in 1960 have been both larger and more seriously interested than before, and directors, encouraged by this interest, are growing bolder.

Satyajit Ray, Bengal's pioneer, is currently filming three short stories by Rabindranath Tagore, which will combine adventurously to make up a feature. For the first time, Ray is also composing his own musical score for the film. More or less simultaneously, he is doing a documentary on Tagore, sponsored by the government, for which he has chosen Jyotirindra Moitra, a considerable poet and composer, as music director. Both films are scheduled for completion by May, to celebrate the poet's centenary.



Less well-known in Europe are Mrinal Sen, whose *Baishey Sravana* was praised at last year's Venice Festival and whose new film, *Once More*, will be written by Asish Barman, joint scriptwriter of *Pather Panchali*, and Ritwik Ghatak, whose *E Flat* features three Tagore songs, one of them particularly fine. Sambhu Mitra, a celebrated actor and stage director, is shooting *Oliver Twist* in Bengali. New films by all these directors have been seen during 1960. The last event of the year was the showing of an exquisite film, *Ganga (The Ganges)*, the second feature made by Rajen Tarafder. Dedicated to the fishermen of Southern Bengal, the film concerns a young fisherman whose village is at the mercy of the local money-lenders and of superstitions which prevent the fishermen from going to the sea. He takes the lead in fighting these fears; and finally the troupe from the village go to the sea, to the richer fishing grounds, leaving the heroine to stay behind until the time when rain will come to Bengal and fish will again swim up the Ganges. *Ganga* is a film of magnificent images—perhaps significantly, its bold and original director was once a commercial artist—and it is a worthy film to end a year full of encouragement for the Bengali cinema.

Opinion Makers

IF CURRENT STATISTICS are correct and cinema attendances in this country have recently taken a turn for the better, this may be due as much to the efforts of the trade itself as to a possible public reaction against the hypnotic pull of TV and the dance-hall. In the past, many major companies, realising the value of word-of-mouth publicity, have arranged special showings of, say, war films for Service audiences or a film like *Inherit the Wind* for an audience of lawyers and teachers. Now, following the American example, the range of invitees for these private, pre-release screenings has been spectacularly widened. All levels of society are now being enthusiastically wooed, for these so-called "opinion makers" may tip the scales towards box-office success, especially when the film has a controversial theme. At least half-a-dozen major British and American companies now arrange shows for hotel receptionists, personnel managers, shop assistants, hairdressers, transport workers, disc jockeys, publicans, church dignitaries, Scotland Yard detectives and schoolchildren. All the evidence seems to indicate that the screenings are much appreciated (films chosen for this treatment have included *On the Beach*, *Elmer Gantry*, *Anatomy of a Murder*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Blind Date*, *Never Take Sweets from a Stranger*); and even when reaction may be less than entirely favourable, the oldest axiom of show business is still relevant—any publicity is better than no publicity at all.

Production in Britain

MICHAEL ANDERSON: a suspense melodrama, *The Naked Edge*, adapted from an American thriller about the consequences of a blackmailing letter. With Gary Cooper, Deborah Kerr, Michael Wilding, Hermione Gingold, Eric Portman. A Pennebaker-Baroda Production, for United Artists.

ANTHONY ASQUITH: *Two Living, One Dead*, a suspense story about a Stockholm post-office robbery; the first Anglo-Swedish co-production. Filming in Sweden, with Virginia McKenna, Bill Travers, Patrick McGeehan, Alf Kjellin. For British Lion release.

JACK CLAYTON: *The Innocents*, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* via the stage adaptation by William Archibald. Deborah Kerr plays the governess of the less than innocent children. For Fox.

SETH HOLT: *A Taste of Fear*, melodrama with a mainly South of France setting, starring Susan Strasberg, Ronald Lewis and Ann Todd; Hammer for Columbia release.

STANLEY KUBRICK: *Lolita*, scripted by Vladimir Nabokov, with James Mason as Humbert Humbert, Sue Lyon (Lolita), Shelley Winters (Lolita's mother) and Peter Sellers. James Harris produces at ABPC Elstree.

LESLIE NORMAN: *Spare the Rod*, with Max Bygraves. Adaptation of Michael Croft's controversial novel about an East End schoolmaster, which was scheduled for filming some years ago, then shelved after alleged censorship problems. Victor Lyndon produces for release through Bryanston.

PETER SELLERS: *Topaze*, from the Marcel Pagnol play and film about a nervous little schoolmaster. Sellers also plays the lead; Dimitri de Grunwald, for Fox release.

George Peppard and Patricia Neal in "Breakfast at Tiffany's", adapted from the Truman Capote story and directed by John Frankenheimer.



"Tirez sur le Pianiste": the kidnapping of Saroyan's brother.

London Festival

by PETER JOHN DYER

PERHAPS SIGHT AND SOUND's tendency in the past has been to treat the London Film Festival with less than justice. No point last year, for instance, in including *Nazarin*, *Conflagration* and *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in the Festival report, since all three had been written about in previous issues; so, for the record, lesser films must be reviewed at the risk of giving readers unable to attend a slightly down-grade view of the proceedings. Then again, the Festival is organised by the publishers of SIGHT AND SOUND. Wouldn't

any fanfares issuing from the Institute's own magazine smack more of fanfaronade? Lastly, there is the special case of the Festival critic himself. More often than not, he has already seen several of the best films abroad, at Cannes, Berlin or Venice. And now that the quality of the same films that attracted his attention then (*L'Avventura*, *The Young One*, *The Lady with the Little Dog*) has stolen the columns of other London Festival critics, turning personal discovery into common property, the temptation to carp at the remaining second-best is almost irresistible.

But one has to resist. Just as one must resist the impulse to draw facile generalisations from the high Festival incidence of rape, murder and delinquent adolescence. Although the critic, dazzled by his first viewing of Antonioni's *L'Avventura*, may suddenly feel an uncontrollable urge to prod all those Spanish, Czech and Hungarian directors for their faltering grasp of communication and technique, he must first pause and consider Antonioni's own painful apprenticeship, the years of forgotten documentaries and largely unpopular neo-realist exploration. For, in attacking *Bad Boys*, *Los Golfos*, *El Cochecito* and *For Whom the Larks Sing* as a limping procession of overworked themes or fumbled opportunities, thrust in the shade by the revelation of *L'Avventura*, the highbrow critic would be attacking by implication the Free Cinema movement he was himself supporting not so long ago, and Antonioni, and any number of other directors back to Vigo and beyond. It would be as idiotic to imply condemnation of Britain's entry *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* for not being *The Alamo*, or about a retired stockbroker in Worthing (as one critic has done), as it would be to complain that Karel Reisz's first film isn't as authoritative or "big" as Visconti's sixth. Directors don't work that way; and there is little point in critics trying to. As for the London Film Festival's organisers, their unique function is to provide, not only the year's best films, but also the year's best first films as well as a comprehensive view of all the most recent developments in world cinema.

1

And this they do. No need, in fact, to worry about a critical fanfare, since the facts speak for themselves: packed houses every night, *L'Avventura* and *Rocco* sold out on the first day of booking, wider press coverage than ever before, personal appearances by Truffaut, Lerner, Weiss, Hani and Youtkevitch, a sobering whiff of political controversy and the New Puritanism. Antonioni, whose film won the Sutherland Trophy, was prevented at the last moment from attending by Milan's threat to ban on grounds of obscenity. The same fate attended (or still attends) the showing of *Notte Brava* in France, *Les Jeux de l'Amour* in America, and—somewhere or other—*Rocco*. Finally, it was rumoured that French officials could not attend all their national events because two of the directors concerned and one writer had signed the Algerian War manifesto. If a film festival's success is measured partially by the degree of controversy surrounding it, then London's, 1960, could be measured in rather more fundamental terms than most.

The purely critical problem remains, however. With the possible exception of Chabrol's *Les Bonnes Femmes*, each of the Festival films signals a relatively serious approach to the cinema on the part of its maker, so that it is legitimate for the critic to express any disappointment he may feel with some force. Furthermore, when this disappointment begins to add up in the case of some half-dozen films into a general feeling of chronic unease, then it becomes more important for the critic to crystallise his reservations than to worry about giving a fair and balanced picture of the Festival as a whole. Agreed, the current trend is to ward off basic issues like the plague, and concentrate instead on the Director and the Film as a sort of isolable, sacrosanct entity. But film-by-film reports tend to leave very little impression other than adjudicator's vanity (A has more tenderness than B, but lacks, for me, C's



"Bad Boys": carnival parade at a Japanese reform school.

warm and tranquil nostalgia). In any case, I haven't seen all the films; while others I have seen, such as *Les Jeux de l'Amour* and Slatan Dudow's unexpectedly delightful East German comedy *Love's Confusion*, are well able to take care of themselves.

2

The Festival's most obvious disappointment lies in the apparently complete lack of impact made by *Les Quatre Cents Coups* on this year's French entries. Like some stiff and staring corpse, *Moderato Cantabile* has wandered through the night in search of its cultural burial place—one of those weekend country houses, last inhabited by *Les Amants*, where chandeliers and conversation tinkle and Jeanne Moreau displays agonised composure. Chabrol, another night-bird, has abandoned the idealism of *Le Beau Serge* and the (albeit subconscious) disclosure of *Les Cousins* for a particularly nasty exercise in True Love pulp-fiction. Truffaut himself has gone dashing back to base and emerged, still fascinating and unnervingly talented, with the freak flop of the year, an archetypal *Cahiers* antic disarmingly entitled *Tirez sur le Pianiste*.

It would be much too easy, and absurdly premature, to write off Truffaut purely on the evidence of *Tirez*. Undisciplined, Hollywood-influenced, confused to the point of anarchy, outrageously funny ("May my mother drop dead if I'm lying," a gangster solemnly swears, and, in a funereally framed cut-in, mother keels over dead as mutton), this infuriating film has two redeeming features. The first, carried over from *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, is its unsentimentally autobiographical flavour. Shy, secretive and withdrawn, the pianist hero so touchingly played by Charles Aznavour has a striking resemblance, both in temperament and appearance, to Truffaut himself. So that, if one delves a little deeper into the workings of a typically devious *Cahiers* mind, all puckish iconoclasm and brusque inattention to conventional niceties coupled with a passion for far-fetched analogy, one could well draw certain parallels. One might even be disposed to identify the celebrated Truffaut of *Quatre Cents Coups* with Edouard Saroyan, ex-concert pianist, masquerading through force of circumstances as Charlie the café musician, friend and relative of gangsters: in other words the Truffaut of *Tirez*, marking

time, churning out B-picture extravagances and satisfying the *Cahiers* crowd.

It would be foolish to try to labour this point (it is, at best, a rationalist's conceit), but I would seriously suggest that this film's autobiographical hints are encouraging. They would seem to indicate that Truffaut still has much that is subjective to get out of his system; and I would personally rather see him expending his obsessions on one (or two, or even three) apprentice, experimental pieces like *Tirez* than turning something more ambitious into a technician's field-day. For, at the moment, it is *Tirez*' second redeeming feature, its intense, perfervid feeling for cinema, which strikes me as Truffaut's greatest potential danger. Though *Tirez*' sheer professional grasp triumphantly extinguishes any lingering suspicions that *Les Quatre Cents Coups* may have been a piece of "unconscious" film-making (in comparison with *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*), it is nevertheless something of a Pyrrhic victory. Sequences of extraordinary brilliance flash past with a prodigality which soon defeats itself. They simply stick to the screen. The film ends, and within hours one realises that nothing has stayed in the mind but the plot (or as much of it as one has managed to follow), which is patently rubbish.

If Truffaut remains one of the white hopes of the French cinema, then *Les Bonnes Femmes* establishes Claude Chabrol as its white elephant. Mad about films, sex and Paris by night (the introductory pick-up, orgy and seduction sequence is brilliantly done), Chabrol is a perfect example of the *Cahiers* theoretician determined to prove he can film anything, but with nothing serious to say. Certainly nothing about real people; and it seems deeply ironic that we last met these four shopgirls, dreaming pathetically of Escape, in at least three novelettes made by Duvivier, one of those established directors *Cahiers* holds in such utter contempt, nearly ten years ago. The lurking sex-maniac with the twitch goes back even further (to Gaumont-British Hitchcock), while nothing has been seen to match Pierre Bertin's roguery-poguery since *Le Dernier Milliardaire*. Though this intramural game of spot-the-influences may distract attention from the hollowness of the film's pretensions, it cannot conceal the fact that behind all the face-pulling there is something distastefully meretricious going on. Much more than it is frank or funny about sex, the film seems to be finding its impetus in a kind of personal, button-holing disgust. The manageress with her blood-stained fetish, the obese prowler and his ferret-faced crony in the swimming bath, the grinning, slaving murderer—all are paraded for our inspection with the insistence of the street-corner tout. This isn't film-making at all. It's exhibitionism.

Nor by any means is it a purely French occupation. Bergman's *The Virgin Spring* reveals the tendency at its most pathological, plodding through its consulting-room horrors without a redeeming hint of self-restraint, humour (toads inside freshly baked loaves—have we come to this?) or illumination. The last straw is a celestial choir. Of course it is all impeccably photographed: I seem to recall that a particularly impressive grouping turned up shortly after half-past nine. I can't speak for the Swedes, but fifteen years spent with Bergman in search of his private Calvary seems a stiff price for the rest of the world to pay for a couple of masterpieces and a lot of lovely lighting. As Ernest Bevin once said of George Lansbury, "He's been a martyr carting his own faggots around quite long enough. It's time someone obliged with a match."

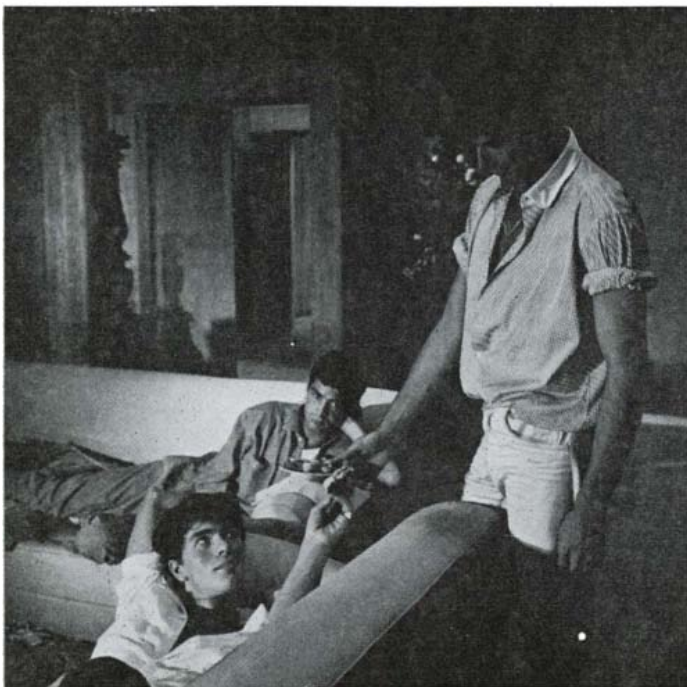
Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers* is a much more curious affair. In fact it bears certain resemblances to *Psycho*. It is every bit as well made (though far harder to justify, and I don't even mean the murder, the rape, and Alain Delon). It has the same attraction of the fabulous. It is just as difficult, while it's on the screen, to believe that it's really happening. And sooner or later (later, in *Rocco's* case—at a second viewing, actually) the critic comes to realise that he has been bamboozled in the lordliest way imaginable. Like Hitchcock, the tactics of this superb craftsman are essentially those of the

confidence trickster. One is reduced to emotional pulp by an apparently authentic social and personal tragedy, complete with brotherly beatings-up, kissings and climactic ululation—until the moment arrives when one reads the reviews and finds that no two critics appear to have been watching the same film.

In the last analysis, *Rocco* is remarkable chiefly as a rare display of operatic melodrama, and as the boldest example of fraudulent conversion since *Osessione*. With no credit at all to Kazan, who in *East of Eden* was the first of several Hollywood directors to use a Biblical framework for a florid family saga, Visconti has here adapted most of the neuroses of current American drama (one mustn't forget his long stage experience as Italy's foremost producer of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller) to express the two themes closest to his heart—corruption and sexual fatality. Of course, one ought never to have expected anything else: Visconti's view of the working class has always been aristocratic. But one can't help being thrown by the Marxist trimmings, the misleading advance reports claiming the film to be a "sequel" to *Terra Trema*, and shocked by the downright sentimentality of the scene in which Annie Girardot's prostitute, fighting back a glycerine tear through dark glasses, tells the sad story of her past. The trouble with films about corruption is that their sole validity so often turns out to be their director's self-indulgence, and *Rocco*—for all its power, sweep and excellent acting—is no exception.

3

These are the split personality films. Hallucinatory, remote, teeming with technical invention, they profess to be about society or faith or human relationships but end up telling you far more about their directors. *Notte Brava*, with its steaming homosexuals, unvaryingly beautiful tarts and Roman Teddy boys played by Frenchmen, is another of them: picturesque, and as phoney as they come. The trouble is, such films have made too many of the more patently honest Festival entries seem wan by comparison. Buñuel, as always, is an exception; so is Satyajit Ray. And, apart from Karel Reisz's film, there is a notable first feature by a young Japanese director. *Bad Boys* is shapeless and derivative (Truffaut, Bresson, Free Cinema), but at least it is wide-awake. One would like to see it again with adequate sub-titles. It has at least two outstanding scenes: an unvarnished case of bullying, and an even weirder sequence in which the delinquents (mostly played by actual reform school graduates) troop down to their island shore



Return to the Twenties: László Ranódy's Hungarian peasant drama "For Whom the Larks Sing".

to yell at passing ships. Susumi Hani is not just another experimental director with a Bolex Reflex in the van and a volume of Freud under one arm. Rather does he seem to have that rare, mysterious talent for depicting the hidden meaning of things, and not just their ordinary appearance.

Otherwise, the kind of freshly observed, excitingly made films calculated to put *Rocco* in the shade have failed to materialise. Irving Lerner's *Studs Lonigan* is full of elaborate montage and bold set pieces—notably a funeral wake, an election orgy and a fantasia of brilliant editing in which Studs' drunken imagination confuses his staid high school teacher with a burlesque stripper; but Lerner ought to have thought twice about Yordan's script, some of the other effects, and the contracts of half the cast.

Hungary's László Ranódy, too, has gone back to the Twenties. This, in itself, would be no objection if *For Whom the Larks Sing* had even a trace of contemporary relevance. Instead we seem to be back where we were four years ago, with lyric peasant drama lapsing into melodrama and a mawkish finale. *Los Golfos*, *El Cochecito*, *Fin de Fiesta*—these are admirable films. Yet one cannot help wondering how much their success actually owes to a good ending, a central performance or an exotic camera style; how long a string of well-intentioned thesis films will survive the heady competition of all the *Roccos* and *Dolce Vitas* without a comparable grasp of cinematic essentials.

This far-reaching gulf, thrown up by the London Festival (and always discounting a handful of comedies and Russian literary adaptations in the middle), seems to me a very real one. On the one hand is a long-established tradition of socially aware film-making, its themes and stumbling techniques suddenly beginning to take on a faded, over-familiar look (even Buñuel's *The Young One*—dare one say it?—has odd moments of informality when it verges on self-parody). On the other hand, there are what I have termed the split personality films—glittering, often persuasive, hiding their

(Continued on page 46)

"Notte Brava": encounter between two brands of delinquent, the Teddy boy thieves and the homosexual idlers.



Shirley Clarke at work on her first feature, "The Connection". Photograph by Gideon Bachmann.

New York LETTER

by CECILE STARR

"THE PROBLEM IN HOLLYWOOD is very acute," wrote the *New York Times* correspondent Murray Schumach in a recent article from the West Coast. He was quoting John W. Lehnern, business representative of the Motion Picture Editors Local 776, which has 1,700 members in the Hollywood area. The "problem" to which Mr. Lehnern referred is, of course, unemployment, caused at least in part by what are termed "runaway" productions—those which have escaped from Hollywood for the sake of realism, lower production costs, personal or corporate tax reasons, or a combination thereof.

At about the same time the cameramen's union, Local 659 of the International Photographers of the Motion Picture Industry, threatened at first to have their wives picket American films made in foreign countries (Ava Gardner was announced as the first target). It later rescinded this plan in favour of one involving full co-operation with the proper federal authorities to catch, and presumably bring back alive, those "disgraceful" producers and stars who have left the country "to evade the American system of taxation."

Since the end of the second World War, the Hollywood oligarchy has been declining. More and more of its aristocrats have been breaking away from the established order and setting up their own kingdoms elsewhere. And Hollywood, which was founded by runaways from the process-servers of the monopolistic Motion Picture Patents Company in New

York, is now calling out a new generation of process-servers to help preserve its own monopolistic structure. If only it were as simple as that!

In a special study prepared by Irving M. Levine, chairman of the foreign film committee of the Theatre Owners of America, American movie-going habits are reported (again by Murray Schumach in the *New York Times*) to have changed so substantially in recent years "that the time will soon come when the majority of theatres in the United States will be showing foreign films as a matter of course." The art houses, says Mr. Levine, will continue to show foreign pictures in their original language, while regular movie theatres will show them dubbed in English. This, incidentally, provides a rational solution to a problem Bosley Crowther has editorialised about at length in recent months under the banner "Sub-titles Must Go". Mr. Crowther objects strongly to hearing a foreign language and reading printed titles while trying to look at a film. Nearly everyone else in town has taken exception to this, and one critic has even gone so far as to suggest that Mr. Crowther must go. If, on the other hand, Mr. Levine's prediction is to come true, Mr. Crowther need go only as far as Philadelphia or Bridgeport to hear foreign films in English; it appears most unlikely that the foreign first-runs in New York will be dubbed.

Ironically enough, it is not the foreign production alone that accounts for Hollywood's doldrums. An editorial this summer

in the *New York Times* reported that New York City is "back in business," with more than a hundred feature films and television films scheduled for production. Even allowing for the likelihood of round-number hyperbole on the part of the Department of Commerce and Public Events which issued the statistics, there has been evidence of much activity here: the Broadway musical *West Side Story*, Carroll Baker in *Something Wild*, Burt Lancaster in *A Matter of Conviction*, and smaller independent features like *Girl of the Night* (directed by Joseph Cates) and *The Connection* (now being directed by Shirley Clarke), as well as the full-blown production of *Butterfield 8*, for which Hollywood crews were transported to New York.

* * *

New York has been growing as a centre of film activity. Witness the careers of cameramen Boris Kaufman and Joseph Brun, both of whom came to New York from Paris early in the war and took jobs with the National Film Board of Canada after being unsuccessful in finding work here. Kaufman came back to New York to work for the Office of War Information, and has continued shooting documentaries, educational films, TV commercials, and whatever else comes his way along these lines. His big break in New York came in 1954 when he shot Kazan's *On the Waterfront*, for which he was given an Academy Award. Since then, he has done one or two features a year: *Baby Doll*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Patterns of Power*, *Crowded Paradise*, *Splendour in the Grass*, *That Kind of Woman*, *The Fugitive Kind*. The list is impressive enough except when one thinks back to the Thirties when Kaufman's credits were appearing on Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* and *Zéro de Conduite*. Kaufman feels, however, that certain types of worthwhile films will continue to be made here in the East, though probably as sporadic and rare in the future as they have been in the past. He has never applied for admission to the Hollywood cameramen's union, and would like to think he could shoot a film anywhere the opportunity arose. "I know I'd be stopped if I wanted to make a film in Hollywood," he told me recently.

Joseph Brun photographed documentary and educational films in New York for several years before going to Africa in 1946-47 to shoot *Savage Splendour* for Armand Denis. The following year he was able to get into the New York cameramen's union and began shooting feature films for Louis de Rochemont: *Whistle at Eaton Falls*, *Walk East on Beacon*, *Martin Luther*, *Cinerama Holiday* and *Windjammer* (the latter not completed by Brun). In the past two years he has photographed *Edge of the City*, *The Last Mile* (starring Mickey Rooney), *Middle of the Night*, *Odds Against Tomorrow* and *Girl in the Dark* (currently running here). Now he is again on location in Africa, this time shooting Howard Hawks' *Hatari*. His is a longer list of features than Kaufman's, but the number of worthwhile ones is about the same for both.

What would Brun and Kaufman be doing now if they had gone to Hollywood in 1941 instead of settling in New York? They would unquestionably have had better studios to work in, more experienced crews to work with, better laboratories and other technical operations. If things had gone really well, they would now be shooting the top Hollywood films—you name them. If not, well, you have only to remember that Karl Freund is best known in Hollywood as head cameraman for the *I Love Lucy* television series.

One thing there is no shortage of in Hollywood today is TV film production. "Today the Warner Bros. are turning out horse-operas like *Chevrolets*," wrote John Crosby recently in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "though actually *Chevrolets* are more differentiated and prettier." At the same time he announced that his regular column will no longer be exclusively about television. "Television no longer deserves

daily criticism on a serious level," he wrote. And he added: "Television isn't awful . . . It's worse than awful. It's a bore. Filmed TV series are being turned out by bored professional hacks—hack writers, hack actors, hack producers. They couldn't care less about what they're doing and it shows."

But don't suppose that Hollywood is ready to call it quits. Consider a recent article in *Variety*, headlined:

ENCLOSED AND AIRCONDITIONED FILM HOUSES AFRICA'S BIG NEED—JOHNSTON

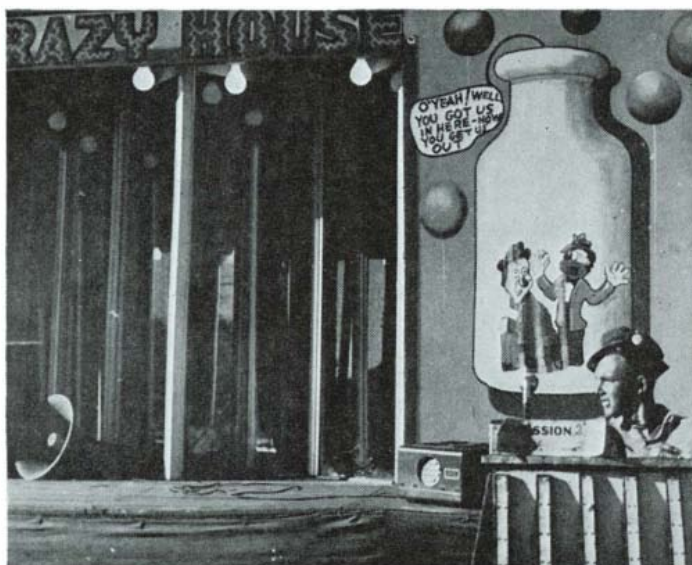
It continues: "The West Coast of Africa, with its natural resources and huge population, offers a stupendous opportunity for development of a new American film market, according to Motion Picture Association chief Eric Johnston . . . just back from a 30,000-mile, five-week tour across the virgin b.o. potential in the fast-growing nations along the Western shores." *Variety's* issue of November 9th indicates further that Johnston is now authorised to appoint a committee to consider plans for a West African Development Company, "to develop new theatres, to provide direct distribution of American films in the area, and to promote and protect general interests of American films," in the West African nations. When that happens, perhaps there will be a new American film capital and *New York Times* correspondent Murray Schumach may be sending his West Coast reports from across the Atlantic Ocean instead of across the American continent.

* * *

The midwestern city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, like many other American university centres, has its own group of film-makers—mostly working with 16 mm. film on educational subjects, fairly literally organised and flatly arranged. One recent exception is the plain little ten minute black-and-white *Pow Wow*, the serio-comic filming of a university band rehearsing in the rain. The film was made as a private venture



Joseph Brun (on platform) checks his light meter during the shooting of the bank robbery thriller "Odds Against Tomorrow".



Allen Downs' "The Colour of the Day".

by two University of Minnesota art teachers, Allen Downs and Jerome Liebling, at an original cash outlay of something like \$15.

Mr. Downs explained how it happened: "We were waiting to get into a parking lot in the rain last fall just before the University Homecoming game, and noticed all this activity in an appropriated parking lot. We thought it very funny, so next day I parked my 1941 Packard nearby, and Jerry ran the tape recorder while I shot, all from the car. We used some old stock that we had found in a refrigerator and didn't know the speed. We found an old discarded Indian film title and used it. We spent one afternoon editing—and now people like it."

Pow Wow won a top prize last autumn at the San Francisco Film Festival and is being sent abroad by Helen Grayson,

who most energetically serves as American liaison for the short film *Journées at Tours*. It will be one of the few American films at recent European festivals that will intentionally make audiences laugh.

Allen Downs has been making films for about ten years starting with *Art and Seeing* (also with Jerome Liebling), which Downs casually describes as "a film on 'seeing' for beginning art students," in which "I learned a lot about editing random material." *Colour of the Day* (1953) was, in his own words, "a sort of picture dance . . . the 'structure', in the ordinary sense, is 'hung on'." *Freight Stop* (1952-53) was "an editing experiment, but rather slight . . . I wanted to try all possibilities and went through two work prints." *Swamp* (1954) was "a little cooked up with that start and finish . . . the body of it, colour-pattern-nature-birds all sing along." This film got Downs a raise, money for a longer nature film, and a gold medal from the Screen Producers Guild for the best university-produced film of the year.

His newest and longest film, *The Flight of the Teal*, traces the migration of Minnesota ducks to Canada, down the Mississippi to Louisiana, Texas, and finally Yucatan, in Mexico. It was financed by the Hill Family Foundation, which has its headquarters in Minneapolis. The film has no narration; printed sub-titles indicate places and seasons and the interesting musical score goes along uninterrupted except for occasional sections of taped sound. Structure is still Downs' most apparent weakness; but his apparent strengths—particularly his delicacy of moving line and colour, as seen in this nature study—produce an effect which is in many ways compatible with the great work of Audubon.

Downs went to Minneapolis in 1949, to teach art, drawing and design and to start a photography course there with Jerome Liebling, who is primarily a still photographer. Most of their films are distributed by the University of Minnesota Audio-Visual Education Service; *Pow Wow*, a private undertaking, has been released here, blown up to 35 mm., by Brandon Films. It is possibly the only American documentary film of the decade which is certain to regain its production costs.

Independents in New York

CHRISTOPHER SLATER writes: Reports of the success of last summer's "Beat, Square and Cool" season at the National Film Theatre, and talk of a new American movement, prompted an investigation of current independent production in New York. Certainly the city is alive with film-making.

Shirley Clarke, known till now only for her experimental shorts, is collaborating with Jack Gelber in filming his play about drug addicts, *The Connection*. Instead of the device of a play within a play of the original, this will be a film within a film, and the jazz will now be used mainly as background music. Otherwise it will resemble the play as closely as possible; the same five leading actors have been engaged and shooting is taking place "in a downtown pad." Jonas Mekas, helped by Edouard Laurot, has just completed *Guns of the Trees*, based on an original story and described as an "attempt to portray the inside of the present generation, its subtle feelings, thoughts and attitudes," through a study of six young people in contemporary New York. Robert Frank (director of *Pull My Daisy*) has nearly finished *The Sin of Jesus*, based on a short story by Isaac Babel which impressed him for its "simple fairy tale quality" and its religious preoccupation with "the moment of doubt."

Morris Engel is planning a child fantasy starring his small son, to be shot in Washington Square. This, he says, will continue the trend in his films to become "progressively more complex and expensive" as his interests have shifted from the visual to the dramatic and now to the problems of a synchro-

nised sound track. His first two films were dubbed; his third, *Wedding and Babies*, used live sound, but he found that the equipment tied him down. Now he has devised "the most portable synchronisation equipment in the world," and using this, together with his specially built 35 mm. camera, hopes to achieve even more flexibility.

Lionel Rogosin is raising money for a documentary on nuclear disarmament, similar in some respects to *March to Aldermaston*, which he calls "the finest film ever made in England." His own film, though, will deal with seven or eight countries. He has not yet worked out the final form, but it will include several different styles: some episodes are to be fact, some semi-fact, some perhaps even short stories. Edward Bland is preparing the script for a feature on the theme "The Negro as Hero" to illustrate the idea suggested in *Cry of Jazz* that "if white America can accept the Negro as the American hero, white America will have come of age." John Cassavetes is negotiating with Paramount to provide the money for his new film, to be shot on location in New York though with a different team of actors from that of *Shadows*. His theme will be that "people are always being pushed beyond their real place in life . . . like actors becoming directors."

This list of "work in progress" is far from complete. A number of other films are being planned and shot in New York; and they seem to be linked less by a common philosophy than by the way in which they are being made. All are essentially personal films, using natural locations, cheaply

FILMS FROM THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

The following films have been added to the Distribution Library during the last three months.

	Reels Sd./St.	Gauge mm.	Running Time
ART AND HISTORY OF THE FILM			
Barney Oldfield's Race for Life (U.S.A., 1914. Directed by Mack Sennett, with Mabel Normand, Mack Sennett, Barry Oldfield, Ford Sterling and the Keystone Cops)	1 St.	16	16 mins.
Beau Brummel (U.S.A., 1924. Directed by Henry Beaumont, with John Barrymore and Mary Astor)	8 St.	16	115 mins.
Golf Nut, The (U.S.A., 1927. Directed by Mack Sennett, with Billy Bevan) ...	1 St.	16	12 mins.
Frisco Honeymoon Bound (U.S.A., 1926. Directed by Mack Sennett, with Billy Bevan)	1 St.	16	14 mins.
Stunt Man, The (U.S.A., 1927. Written and directed by Larry Semon) ...	1 St.	16	13 mins.
FILMS ON THE ARTS			
The Artist Speaks: Kenneth Armitage (Produced and directed by John Read for B.B.C. Television)	2 Sd.	16	14 mins.
Borromini (Italian Commentary. Produced by Primo Zeglio, on the Italian architect Borromini)	2 Sd.	16	15 mins.
Creative F/Soc. Package Programme (A collection of experimental films made by American "West Coast" individualists)	4 St/d.	16 Col.	38 mins.
Serenal (N.F.B.C. Norman MacLaren)	$\frac{1}{2}$ Sd.	16 Col.	4 mins.
FILMS MADE BY CHILDREN			
Bunny Bother (Made by the pupils of Lionel Road Primary School, Brentford)	1 St.	16	10 mins.
Guns and Girls (Made by pupils of Middle Street Secondary Commercial School, Newcastle on Tyne)	1 St.	16	8 mins.
Wild Boy, The (Made by pupils of Speedwell Boys' School, Bristol)	1 St.	16	14 mins.
THE SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY			
Early Diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy (Sheffield Hospital)	2 Sd.	16	22 mins.
Déracinements (France, 1957. Films d'Ariel and Cliniques des Maladies Mentales et de l'Encephale)	1 Sd.	16 Col.	12 mins.

B.F.I. SPECIALISED LIBRARY										Reels Sd./St.	Gauge mm.	Running Time
CANOEING												
Ardèche Gorge, The	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1 St.	16 Col.	10 mins.
Haute Rivière	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	16	31 mins.
8 MM LIBRARY												
Felix in Hollywood (U.S.A., 1927)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1 St.	8	10 mins.
Good-Night Nurse (U.S.A., 1928. Directed by Henry W. George, with Lupino Lane)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	8	28 mins.
I Do (U.S.A., 1921. With Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis and Noah Young)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	8	30 mins.
Kid Speed (U.S.A., c.1925. A Vitagraph Comedy with Larry Semon and Oliver Hardy)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	8	28 mins.
8 MM CANOEING												
Ardèche Gorge, The	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1 St.	8 Col.	10 mins.
Glen Albyn	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	8 Col./BW	34 mins.
Haute Rivière	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	8	31 mins.
Journey down the Spey	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	8 Col.	18 mins.
River Sport	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 St.	8	20 mins.
FILMS FOR C.B.A. REGISTERED SOCIETIES												
<i>Added:</i>												
Adorable Creatures...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10 Sd.	16	105 mins.
Living	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	14 Sd.	16	130 mins.
<i>Withdrawn:</i>												
Little World of Don Camillo, The												
<i>Withdrawn from B.F.I. Distribution Library:</i>												
Geometry Lesson	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...		35 only	
Tom Brown "D"	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 Sd.	16	
Raga...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...		16.	

LECTURES

JANUARY 1961

Date	Time	Subjects	Speaker	Location	Organisation
5	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Film I	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
5/6	Weekend	History of the Western Film	John Huntley	Thaxted	Clarance House, Thaxted, Essex (Essex Education Committee)

JANUARY—continued

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
6/8	Weekend	The French Cinema	Alan Lovell	Grantley Hall, Ripon	County Council of the West Riding of Yorkshire Education Department
8	2.00 p.m.	Film Appreciation as a Youth Club Topic	W. Charles Everett	Cheltenham	Cheltenham Youth Committee
12	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Film 2	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
19	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Film 3	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
19	7.30 p.m.	New Trends in the Cinema	Sam Kula	Bristol	Bristol Film Guild
20	5.00 p.m. & 7.15 p.m.	(a) How a Film is Made; (b) What to Look For in Film	Nancy Pusey	Slough	Slough Junior Film Club
21	7.15 p.m.	Ninety-nine Sponsors	Thorold Dickinson	Farnborough	Royal Aircraft Establishment Film Society
22	7.45 p.m.	Analysis of <i>The Seventh Seal</i>	Alan Lovell	Bexleyheath	Bexley Adult Education Centre (Kent Education Committee)
23	7.00 p.m.	Social Comment in the Cinema	Brian Groombridge	Birmingham	Birmingham Film Society (Uni. of B'ham Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies) †
26	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Film 4	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
27	7.30 p.m.	Analysis of <i>Viva Zapata</i>	Paddy Whannel	Sawston, Cambs.	Sawston Village College
27	7.45 p.m.	The Polish Cinema	David Naden	Tunbridge Wells	Tunbridge Wells Film Society

FEBRUARY 1961

2	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Film 5	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
4/5	Weekend	Films—Cinema and Television	John Huntley	Matlock	Derbyshire Education Committee (Youth Committee)
6	7.30 p.m.	History of Movies 1918-39	W. Charles Everett	Feltwell R.A.F.	Uni. of Cambridge Board of Extra-Mural Studies (Education in H.M. Forces)
9	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Cinema 6	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
10	3.45 p.m.	The Wider Screen	G. Buckland-Smith	Romford	Harold Hill Grammar School
11/12	Weekend	The Mirror of the Screen	A. W. Hodgkinson and Alan Lovell	Stafford House, Hassocks	East Sussex Education Committee
14	7.30 p.m.	Silent Films of the 1920's	Stanley Crawford	Ruislip	S. Ruislip Co-operative Film Society
15	8.00 p.m.	The "Off-Beat" Film	Stanley Crawford	St. Albans	St. Albans Film Society
16	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Film 7	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
16	7.30 p.m.	Film History	Alan Lovell	Abergavenny	Abergavenny Three Arts Club
21	7.30 p.m.	Films for Use in the Youth Club	W. Charles Everett	Bristol	S. Gloucestershire Youth Service Association
20	7.00 p.m.	"Film Justice" (Crime in the Cinema)	R. G. Hamilton	Birmingham	Birmingham Film Society
23	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Cinema 8	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
23	Not yet fixed	Film Criticism	Dr. Brian Ansell	Attingham Park, Shrewsbury	University of Birmingham Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies
25	7.45 p.m.	Not yet fixed	W. Charles Everett	Parish Hall, Bushey	St. James Music and Drama Society
28	3.45 p.m.	The Direction of the British Film Industry since the War	Derrick Knight	East Ham	East Ham Grammar School for Boys, E.6
28	7.30 p.m.	Films for Discussion Groups in the Youth Club	W. Charles Everett	Bristol	S. Gloucestershire Youth Service
28	10.00 a.m.	On the Screen: The Director and Actor (L.C.C. Children's shows)	Paddy Whannel	National Film Theatre	L.C.C. Education Dept.

MARCH 1961

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
1	10.00 a.m.	On the Screen: The Director and Actor (L.C.C. Children's shows)	Paddy Whannel	National Film Theatre	L.C.C. Education Department
2	10.00 a.m.	As above	As above	As above	As above
2	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Cinema 9	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
6	7.00 p.m.	Films and Filming for Children	Frank Wells	Birmingham	Birmingham Film Society
7/8/9	10.00 a.m.	Not yet fixed (L.C.C. Children's shows)	Paddy Whannel	National Film Theatre	L.C.C. Education Department
8	4.30 p.m. & 8.00 p.m.	Not yet fixed	Alan Lovell	Broadstairs	Kingsgate College (National Council of Y.M.C.A.'s)
9	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Cinema 10	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
10	Not yet fixed	Changing Styles of Film Editing	Derrick Knight	Epsom	Epsom Cine Society
10/12	Weekend	The Film in France	Alan Lovell	Farnham, Surrey	Moor Park College
16	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Cinema 11	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art (Kent Education Committee)
19	7.00 p.m.	Jazz Films	John Huntley	Oxford	City of Oxford Community Centre and Youth Service
23	6.15 p.m.	History and Art of the Cinema 12	Derek Eastaway	Rochester	Medway College of Art
23	Not yet fixed	Film Appreciation	Dr. Brian Ansell	Attingham Park	University of Birmingham Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies
25	8.00 p.m.	Film Appreciation	John Huntley	Peterborough	Oundle School Film Society
29	8.00 p.m.	The Influence and Value of Films	Stuart Hall	Wimbledon	Y.M.C.A., Wimbledon

COURSES CONTINUING

The two Basic and two Advanced Classes of the University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies will start the second half of the courses in the week beginning January 2nd, 1961 and run until March 24th. Classes fully enrolled.

THE BOOK LIBRARY

The following books have recently been added to the library (those marked with an asterisk are available for loan to members).

- ACOSTA, Mercedes de.—Here lies the heart. London, Andre Deutsch. 1960.
 *ARDMORE, Jane.—The self-enchanted, Mae Murray. New York, McGraw Hill. 1959.
 *BARRY, Michael and WILSON, Donald.—The television playwright. London, Michael Joseph. 1960.
 *BEAUVOIR, Simone de.—Brigitte Bardot. London, Deutsch & Weidenfeld. 1960.
 *BETTS, Ernest.—Inside pictures. London, Cresset Press. 1960.
 *CHAPLIN, Charles, Jnr.—My father, Charlie Chaplin. London, Longmans Green. 1960.
 CONANT, Michael.—Antitrust in the motion picture industry. London, Cambridge University Press for the University of California. 1960.
 DECKER, Richard G.—Plays for our time. New York, Oxford Book Co. 1960.
 *CHEVALIER, Maurice.—With love. London, Cassell. 1960.
 CHIARETTI, Tommaso *ed.*—L'avventura. Bologna, Cappelli. 1960.
 *EASTMAN-KODAK.—How to make good home movies. London, Kaye. 1960.
 *EISENSTEIN, Sergei.—Film form and Film sense. New York, Meridian. 1957.
 FELLINI, Federico and LO DUCA.—La dolce vita. Paris, Editions J. J. Pauvert. 1960.
 *FIELDS, Gracie.—Sing as we go. London, Muller. 1960.
 *FULTON, A. R.—Motion pictures; the development of an art. Norman, University of Oklahoma. 1960.
 GILMOUR, Edwyn.—The Bell & Howell projector book. London, Focal Press. 1960.
 HAILEY, Arthur.—Close-up on writing for television. New York, Doubleday. 1960.
 INGE, William.—Four plays. London, Heinemann. 1960.
 KEZICH, Tullio, *ed.*—La dolce vita. Bologna, Cappelli. 1960.
 *LABARTHE, André S.—Essai sur le jeune cinéma français and Comment peut-on être Martien. Paris, Terrain Vague. 1960.
 *LAURA, Ernesto G. *ed.*—Il film Cecoslovacco. Rome, Edizioni dell'Ateneo. 1960.
 *McCAMBRIDGE, Mercedes.—The two of us. London, Peter Davies. 1960.
 MONTESANTI, Fausto, *ed.*—L'uomo di paglia. Bologna, Cappelli. 1958.
 PALADINI, Aldo, *ed.*—La diga sul Pacifico. Bologna, Cappelli. 1957.
 RENZI, Renzo, *ed.*—Era notte a Roma. Bologna, Cappelli. 1960.
 ROSSETTI, Enrico, *ed.*—Jovanka e le altre. Bologna, Cappelli. 1960.
 *ROTHA, Paul.—The film till now. 3rd edition. London, Vision Press. 1960.
 THIEL, Reinhold E.—Puppen und zeichenfilm. Berlin, Rembrandt-Verlag. 1960.
 *WEST, Mae.—Goodness had nothing to do with it. London, W. H. Allen. 1960.

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made and quite independent. It is also interesting that nearly all the directors like to use some degree of improvisation, though for very different reasons.

Cassavetes inevitably tends to favour this method as a result of his Actors Studio training and his conviction of the paramount importance of the actor. "The audience *must* believe in him and he cannot give a truthful performance if he's imposed upon by a writer: he must not mimic someone else's feelings. As an actor myself, I realised he will often understand more of a situation than the director." Mekas uses improvisation primarily to achieve a feeling of spontaneity, which, he has written, serves an ethical purpose: "a means of freeing oneself from the moral, social clichés, outdated *mores*, the business way of life." He has a basic story outline, tells his actors the point they must reach in each episode, and then allows them to fill in the details themselves. Rogosin similarly likes to provide his unprofessional "type" actors with an outline situation and then to let them give it substance. But he would rather stress "realism" as his aim.

Frank also uses only a rough script and his ideas tend to alter up to the editing stage. He prefers to work this way not because of any particular principles but because of the freedom it allows him. At the moment, though, he regards this as the freedom of inexperience and as he learns more he expects it to become more limited. This is Engel's experience: "At first you tend to improvise, but as you come to know more you inevitably plan more. But while I now pre-plan a good deal, I try to get the best of both worlds."

With their makers variously borrowing money from friends, deferring costs of stock and payment of actors, working outside the unions, all these films may be completed. But if this burst of activity is to continue it will need more than

enthusiasm and talent. It will need money; and this ultimately will depend upon obtaining adequate distribution.

Those making their first major films are optimistic. Shirley Clarke believes that "Americans are growing up culturally." She sees the conservatism of the middle men as the real problem and in showing *The Connection* she plans to by-pass them, by barnstorming six key cities, hiring theatres herself, making personal appearances, getting her film "culturally in." If this is successful she feels the distributors should be no problem. She also claims that, with Broadway shows more expensive and unpredictable as investments year by year, backers are becoming increasingly willing to put their money into films.

Mekas becomes annoyed at the mention of money. "Everyone's fooled by budgets. You can *always* get the money somehow," he insists. He started with \$6,000 and borrowed more after this ran out. He now estimates a total budget of \$25,000, but this includes processing costs, payment of which he has deferred until after distribution. Of this he is confident. "Besides," he says, "any film can make \$25,000." Those with more experience, however, seem more sceptical. Rogosin points out that although *On the Bowery* was a critical success and has done well nearly everywhere it has been shown, it still hasn't made \$15,000—most distributors turned it down automatically because of its subject matter. In fact, guessing this might happen, he deliberately took it first to Venice, then to the National Film Theatre, so that he could use European acclaim as a lever to ensure a New York showing. (This, incidentally, has been more or less the policy followed by Cassavetes with *Shadows*.) The same method, however, came to nothing with *Come Back, Africa* and finally Rogosin had to lease a small New York cinema himself. The encouraging sign is that both his films continue to make money, in fact slightly more each year, so that in a few years he expects them each to have recovered the \$80,000 which they cost. "But the film business is a mess," he says. "To break through the system once may be possible, but twice is very rare and three times almost impossible."

Sidney Meyers is also pessimistic. "The occasional off-beat movie may make a hit, but there's no continuity; there's no room for the quiet film, the adagio." His own *The Quiet One* made the \$60,000 it cost, but he attributes this largely to luck: its opening in 1948 happened to coincide with a sudden popular interest both in the colour problem and in psychoanalysis. He is sceptical too about the chances of finding outside finance—money in the cinema is usually too slow in returning for the business man. At present Meyers is doing a sponsored short on eighteenth century music "influenced by *Listen to Britain*"; but as things are he sees little chance of ever making the two adaptations he'd most like to attempt: Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and three stories from *Winesburg, Ohio*.

Yet there does seem to have been a definite shift in the American exhibition pattern during the last few years. Some four hundred cinemas now have exclusively "art" policies while an equal number have a "switch" policy, mixing "art" with the conventional Hollywood film. Between them, these cinemas can offer an estimated half-million seats daily. *Variety* recently reported that concrete proposals are being considered for the formation of an American Film Institute to co-ordinate these cinemas and "the activities of all factors concerned with the expansion of exhibition opportunities for significant films." The possibilities for any vigorous and continued life among American independents would seem to lie in this direction.



Carl Lee (Cowboy) and Barbara Winchester (Sister Salvation) in "The Connection". Photograph by Gideon Bachmann.





L'Année Dernière



L'Année Dernière, which Alain Resnais has been shooting at the Nymphenburg and Schlessheim palaces at Munich, promises to be as individual as *Hiroshima mon Amour*. The script is by the novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet; the players, Delphine Seyrig, Giorgio Albertazzi and Sacha Pitoëff, are more or less unknown in the cinema. The story concerns a woman and two men, identified only as 'A', 'X' and 'M'. 'A' has been living with 'M'. 'X' comes into her life, claiming to have known her, to have shared some of the past with her. Conflicts and tensions develop between 'A' and 'X', 'X' and 'M' . . .

But the plot, which again blends past and present, is apparently only a spring-board. Resnais and Robbe-Grillet have defined their ambition: "The composition of images, their linking, the sound that accompanies them, need no longer be subject to the tyranny of 'common sense'. When one hears a word, one doesn't always know who's speaking, or where the sound comes from, or even what it means; when one looks at a scene, one doesn't always know where it's taking place, or when, or exactly what it represents . . . Nevertheless, through these strangenesses and uncertainties, the images and sounds . . . should impose themselves with enough force, enough evident necessity, to define a contemporary realism, breaking down the old opposition between realistic and poetic cinema . . ."

Left: Delphine Seyrig and Alain Resnais.

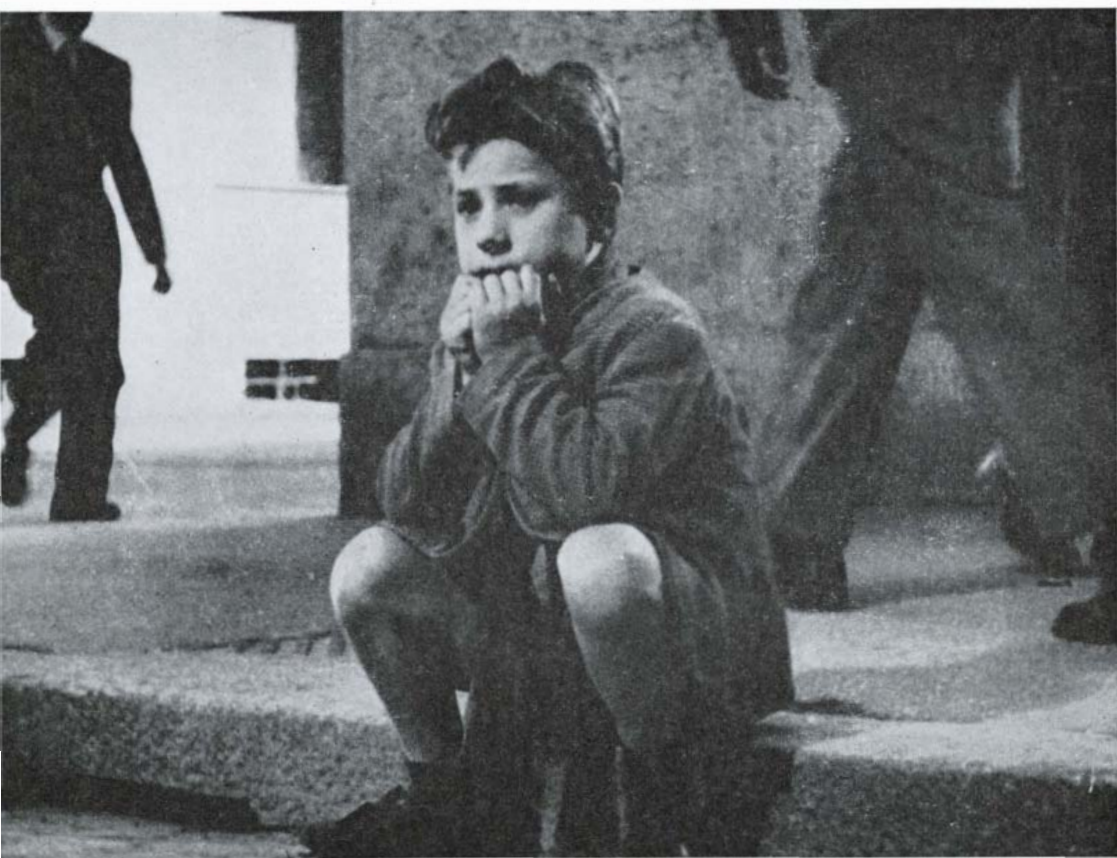
Above: Giorgio Albertazzi, Sacha Pitoëff.

Left: Resnais, Giorgio Albertazzi and Delphine Seyrig.



why
neo-realism
failed

ERIC RHODE



Above: "La Terra Trema".

Left: Enzo Staiola in "Bicycle Thieves".

This has been a year of revival in the Italian cinema, though its achievements have moved a long way from neo-realism. Was there some theoretical flaw at the centre of the neo-realist idea? This study examines neo-realist ideology as much as its expression; and examples have been deliberately limited to certain films by three key directors.

IN THE SUMMER NUMBER OF SIGHT AND SOUND Morando Morandini, in an interesting though badly translated article, suggested that the reason why there was no *nouvelle vague* in Italy was that, although the younger directors felt an uneasy loyalty to the tradition of neo-realism, they didn't know how to put it into action. Yet the dilemma seems to me to be deeper than one of loyalty to a tradition unable to cope with the complexity of society in the Sixties; and deeper than Alberto Moravia's belief that neo-realism is exhausted because it has fulfilled its task, which was to "respond . . . to the overwhelming need after the war to give an account of every kind of deficiency brought about by defeat and national disaster." Neo-realism was more than a kind of spiritual Marshall Aid, or even a form of social criticism. It was an attempt to deal with a crisis which this country in modern times has never known, in which all values had been destroyed. It was an attempt to begin at the beginning, in which the answers to such basic questions as "what is man, and what are his rights and responsibilities?" had to be rethought in terms of the new situation.

"It was a kind of domestic universal judgment," said Zavattini at Perugia in 1949, "without trumpets, without celestial intervention, by men and for men . . ." It was, in short, as much a metaphysical as a social criticism of the human condition; and its achievement, by the very magnitude of its intention, could only be partial. Yet it is not by the partiality of the achievement that the younger directors are embarrassed, nor by the economic crisis of 1948-49—grave though it was—but by a failure at the heart of the neo-realists' ideology, an intellectual confusion in their conception of realism, which became increasingly clear as time went by and the complexity of society became more and more apparent. By the late Forties the situation had become acute, and the seriousness of this failure well-nigh brought the neo-realist movement to a halt in the early Fifties. The problem would have been easy if it had been nothing more than a change of taste; but in fact it dealt with nothing less than a choice of a way of life. The failure of neo-realism, said Zavattini, "would be the end of the cinema, of democracy." And these frightening words contained more than a grain of truth. For the products of neo-realism are the most important attempts of liberal man to realise himself in film, if not in the whole of art.

It is for this reason that the younger directors and critics were unable to reject neo-realism outright. Its intentions are inextricably related to the way of life most of them subscribe to. Yet without diagnosing the flaw at the centre of the ideology it is impossible for them to create a *nouvelle vague* of any seriousness. Perhaps we, from our distant shores, can throw some light on this dilemma; but before we can do this we must ask what, in fact, neo-realism was.

* * *

The reality buried under myths slowly reflowered. The cinema began its creation of the world. Here was a tree; here an old

man; here a house; here a man eating, a man sleeping, a man crying.—CESARE ZAVATTINI.

It is indeed expectation, critical and unsatisfied, that I would say is the central feeling (sic) of neo-realism.—FEDERICO FELLINI.

To see man without faking the unusual, the unusual only being reached through investigation.—ROBERTO ROSSELLINI.

The momentary absence of man transforms everything into an inanimate object . . . the cinema that interests me is anthropomorphic.—LUCHINO VISCONTI.

AS A POLITICAL PRISONER may be released, blinking, from his dark cell into the light, so the neo-realists, as the shackles of Fascism fell from them, looked about the world. The comparison is romantic and reminiscent of *Fidelio*; but apt in that, as the neo-realists looked about them, it was enough, in those first lyrical moments, that the world *was*. "The cinema had completely failed in its purpose by choosing the path of Méliès rather than that of Lumière," said Zavattini. Which is to say that the neo-realists wanted a cinema not of fantasy and technical brilliance, but one which revealed the texture of reality as in a newsreel. This assumption—that reality is the world of documentary—is one of those half-truths, the danger of which becomes apparent when we find Zavattini claiming that the supreme act of faith for a neo-realist would be to present, in the middle of a film, ninety consecutive minutes in the life of a man. This ambition of course is absurd, and in terms of art quite meaningless. Yet the intention behind it is significant. It is a ruthless desire for honesty, pushed to an extreme, in reaction to a period of extreme dishonesty.

Such a desire was the driving force behind the movement's manifesto, published in *Cinema* in 1943, the year in which Umberto Barbaro, a professor at the Centro Sperimentale film school, coined the expression "neo-realism". With strenuous rhetoric, the manifesto attacked the rhetoric of twenty years of Fascism, of four years of war propaganda, and indirectly of twenty centuries of ecclesiastical domination. It made four important points, all of them significantly negative. It wanted to get rid of "the naïve and mannered clichés which formed the larger part of Italian films"; of "those fantastic and grotesque fabrications which exclude human problems and the human point of view"; of historical set-pieces and adaptations from the novel, unless there was a political reason for not doing so; and, finally, of the rhetoric which showed Italians in general as "inflamed by the same noble sentiments . . . all of them equally aware of the problems of life."

This manifesto was as good a start as any movement might wish for, yet obviously in itself it was inadequate. In art, honesty is not enough. This is a homely platitude at any time; yet one's doubts that the neo-realists were aware of it grow when one notes the various, and often curious, influences shaping the movement. According to Georges Sadoul, these were: the Russian cinema (mainly through translations of Pudovkin, as copies of the films were scarce or unobtainable); the French cinema—through Clair, Duvivier, Carné, and above all the Renoir of *La Chienne*, *Les Bas Fonds* and *La Grande Illusion*; a few Italian films made between 1910 and 1920 like Ghione's *Za la Mort* and Martoglio's *Sperduti nel Buio*; the dialect dramas of Eduardo de Filippo; Verga (who had been banned by the Fascists); and, above all, Zola. As Verga had realised the nature of his talent after reading

Madame Bovary, so the neo-realists hoped to find themselves after studying *La Bête Humaine*.

What is strange is that none of these influences—except perhaps *La Grande Illusion*—could be described as examples of realism. They are all, in fact, examples of the later school of naturalism, which is so often confused with realism but which is indeed decisively different. It was precisely because the neo-realists were more interested in naturalism than in realism that they were most influenced by that arch-priest of naturalism, the prodigious Zola. It was Zola who, in defining the naturalist writer, defined the processes of naturalism itself: “His first concern will be to collect material, to find out what he can about this world he wishes to describe . . . When all this material has been gathered, the novel will take place of its own accord. All the novelist has to do is to group the facts into a logical sequence. . . Interest will no longer be focused on the peculiarities of the story: on the contrary, the more general and commonplace the story is, the more typical it will be.”

“It will take place of its own accord.” With such a verbal sleight of hand Zola tries to slip round the central problem of aesthetics, the problem of form; and, in doing so, defines the limitations of naturalism. Of course, to create a work of art isn’t as easy as that. As George Lukacs says: “Every quality of every human being is an accident and every object merely a piece of stage property, until their decisive interconnections are expressed in poetic form, by means of some action.”

If “form” is defined as the kind of necessity which links together episodes into an action, and if in naturalism the qualities of human beings are accidents and the objects are merely pieces of stage property—enough, in the naïvest sense, that they are like life!—we see how the influence of this movement on the neo-realists was, in the main, pernicious. In a way, one can blame the war for this unhappy situation. How different it all might have been if instead of the Renoir of *La Chienne*—all arbitrary in its relationship of episodes, in its “average” characters and in its socially meaningless ironies—they had seen instead the realistic *Crime de Monsieur Lange*. But this, unfortunately, was not so, and the neo-realists found themselves floundering. Faced with the most important problem in aesthetics, they were unable to cope with it adequately. We can see how strange the results were by looking at some of the films of De Sica and Zavattini.

Bicycle Thieves and Umberto D.

Good proletarian art is usually covert Pastoral . . . When Pastoral fails its tricks of thought take refuge in child-cult.—
WILLIAM EMPSON.

. . . I at once recognised that my light vessel of consciousness . . . couldn’t be with verisimilitude a rude little boy; since, beyond the fact that little boys are never so “present,” the sensibility of the female young is indubitably, for early youth, the greater . . .—HENRY JAMES ON *Maisie*.

THE SENTIMENTALITY WHICH MANY critics have felt in *Bicycle Thieves* arises, I feel, from the unresolved contradictions set up by its two themes. Ostensibly a protest against degrading social and economic conditions, this theme is never more than a cover or excuse for the theme of solidarity against loneliness, in which De Sica and Zavattini are really involved emotionally. Their embarrassment at this confusion can best be seen at the climax of the film. This, oddly enough, is not the moment of degradation when the father is caught stealing the bicycle, but the moment when the father strikes his son, and then suspects the child has been drowned (symbolically suggesting that he

has killed the son himself); and it is a crisis filmed in a nervous, tentative way—almost as if the editor had had to work with insufficient material.

The confusion here arises, I believe, because De Sica and Zavattini are unable to give their central theme a socially realistic significance and have had to tack it on to the bicycle story; which is in itself an excellent idea, but one too slight to bear the weight of much social comment. What Empson says of Pastoral (“You take a limited life and pretend it is a full and normal one, and a suggestion that one must do this with all life, because the normal is itself limited.”) is true of this theme. So are his remarks on Hardy: “Hardy is fond of showing an unusually stupid person subjected to very unusually bad luck, and then a moral is drawn, not merely by inference but by solemn assertion, that we are all in the same boat as this person whose story is striking precisely because it is unusual.” This determinism is one of those tricks the naturalists, above all Zola, use to counterfeit a sense of form. In *Bicycle Thieves* it is used—unsuccessfully, I feel—to merge together the two themes.

The trick, though, which has I think most fuddled critics into thinking this is a film of protest is the repeated shift to the child at moments of crisis: we look at the world through his eyes. When the father is almost arrested, and the social significance of the film should be made clear, the camera cuts to the boy’s face and one of the accusers says: “That was a fine thing to teach your son.” By doing this, De Sica and Zavattini blur us into thinking that they are dealing with a social problem on an adult level; when all they are giving us, in fact, is a child’s reaction to the situation. When proletarian art fails, says Empson, it takes refuge in child-cult—and the child becomes judge (the governing intelligence) of the work in hand. So in this film the outlook of the father is, by implication, shown as identical with that of his son. One might see this as a point of some satirical force about a society which doesn’t educate its members sufficiently for them to cope with complex moral problems; but I think not. The same trick is played in *I Bambini ci Guardano* (1943). Here the child’s rejection of its mother in the last moments of the film is made to imply a serious moral criticism of the mother’s behaviour which, if one tries to think about it as a possible adult judgment, is plainly silly.

Yet by giving us its glimpse of a child’s vision, *Bicycle Thieves* remains permanently interesting. In the ambiguity of the corrupt market, with its confusing thousands of bicycles, its lying thieves and pederasts, which dissolves almost magically as rain falls; in the ambiguity of the Silenus-like peasant, who knows where the bicycle is but is unable to tell them; in the tantalising way the thief appears and disappears in their search through Rome; and finally in the ambiguity of their meeting with him, when they begin to doubt if, in fact, he stole the bicycle and begin to see that he is as poor and desperate as they are—the despair of a child confronted by an aggressive world and a problem too difficult for it to grasp is enacted with an almost Dickensian power.

What I find really strange about this film is that it has been taken as a work of protest. The contrary, I think, would be more true. As *Bicycle Thieves* develops, the feeling behind it becomes more and more conservative, with a morality as Augustinian as the morality of Graham Greene. After the encounter with the thief, the suggestion that all men are evil becomes clearly explicit and darkens the final section of the film. The theme of solidarity, for instance, turns against itself: the crowd which protects the thief and almost lynches the father is similar to the crowd which denounces the father when



"Umberto D.": "... the moments when the old man and the girl are at their most authentic."

he attempts to steal the bicycle; and, as he fails in this, the football crowd, which up to then had seemed desirable, howls bestially from a nearby stand. Even more horrible is the suggestion—I may be going too far in seeing this—that it's thanks to the father's scruples that he is slow in stealing the bicycle, and so is caught. The weeping of father and son, therefore, in the last moments of the film, is not at social injustice but at their realisation of fallen man, at the never ending corruption about them, at the corruption within themselves. Their only hope as they clasp hands is in the solidarity of family life; which seems to me a piteously inadequate hope in the face of such a complete despair . . .

Umberto D is a later, and I think better, film. Though even here there is little sign of social protest, this is much more plausible since Umberto himself is a genteel old man. Yet it is interesting to note how, after the first reel, the problem of old age pensioners is quickly shelved, while the two metaphysical themes—of the nature of authenticity and man's loneliness in the face of death—become the film's main concern.

The handling of these two themes is finely done, with techniques similar to those in *Bicycle Thieves*. The identification of Umberto with his dog, for instance, is a far more effective device than the identification of father and son in the previous film—nowhere more successfully so than in the scene when Umberto, searching at the kennels for his lost dog, sees waifs and strays being wheeled into the gas chamber and is struck with horror at the thought of his own impending, undignified death. Just as impressive are the long sequences of

the old man shuffling around his room and of the servant girl wandering around her kitchen at dawn. With great economy, these scenes describe the moments when the old man and the girl are at their most authentic; and are the closest Zavattini has come to his ideal of inserting ninety consecutive minutes of a man's life in the middle of a film. We have here the paradox of a neo-realist film presenting, at moments, a reality as fragmented and almost as meaningless as the reality of Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur*. Yet we should not be surprised, for this is the logical development of Zola's theory of collecting facts and seeing what significance they have in themselves. Not unexpectedly, they have very little . . . Unfortunately, these brilliant scenes emphasise the arbitrary quality of the social satire: the scenes in the hospital or with the exploiting landlady appear—from the realist point of view—contingent to the main themes. And the ending of the film on a note of weak uplift (in conflict with the pessimism of its inherent logic) suggests that yet again De Sica and Zavattini aren't really aware of what kind of film they are making.

Let me draw some conclusions from this. In their inability to synthesise their Augustinianism with the optimism of the neo-realist movement; in their inability to think beyond the family unit to the problems of society (a failure prevalent in Italian films); and in their over-emphasis on the truth of a child's vision, De Sica and Zavattini resort, somewhat uncertainly, to Christian ideas. I'm not suggesting here that Christianity is unable to cope with the most serious social issues of our time—perhaps these films would be less



Rossellini's "Paiza".

sentimental if they were more obviously Christian. Rather, I am suggesting that De Sica and Zavattini are using Christianity (perhaps sub-consciously) as an escape from facing up to social problems. This is a debatable point. What is less debatable is the effect of naturalism on their work. It is totally pernicious. For not only does it not help them to resolve the contradictions between their social and metaphysical themes, but it doesn't help them to confront the social conditions of their time. Perhaps the methods of realism might have taken them further; but that would have required a clearer idea of what realism is.

Realism and naturalism

The poet's function is to describe not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable and necessary.—ARISTOTLE.

What is art? Nothing more than concentrated nature. But this concentration is never formal; on the contrary, it is the greatest possible intensification of the content, of the social and human essence of the situation.—BALZAC.

Art is a cold sphere . . .—THOMAS MANN.

WHAT THEN IS REALISM? George Lukacs, in discussing Zola, says: "Perhaps no one has painted more colourfully and suggestively the outer trappings of modern life. But only the outer trappings . . . They form a gigantic backdrop in front of which tiny haphazard people move to and fro and live their haphazard lives. Zola could never achieve what the truly great realists Balzac, Tolstoy or Dickens accomplished: to present social institutions as human relationships and social objects as the vehicle of such relationships . . ."

De Sica in "Il Generale delle Rovere".

And then goes on to say that:

Here we have . . . naturalism in concentrated essence and sharp opposition to the traditions of the old realism; a mechanical average takes the place of the dialectic unity of type and individual; description and analysis is substituted for epic situation and epic plots. The tension of the old-type story, the co-operation and clashing of human beings who are both individuals and at the same time representatives of important social tendencies—all these are eliminated and their place is taken by "average" characters whose individual traits are accidents from the artistic point of view (or in other words have no decisive influence on what happens in the story), and these "average" characters act without pattern, either merely side by side or else in completely chaotic fashion.

This definition of realism is liberating. Realism (as Goethe saw in Balzac) can use the romantic element—the fantastic, the bizarre, the ugly, the ironically or sentimentally exaggerated, to show up essential human and social relationships. Despite a popular misconception, it should not deal with the working class alone (since this, without some contrast or conflict with another class, usually leads to child-cult); nor need it be about the working class at all. (It was, significantly, the Goncourt brothers, two middle class gentlemen in search of what to them was the exotic, who first wrote a novel *entirely* centred on the sadly sordid situation of a working class girl.)

But realism, like all art, is a cold sphere. And the realism of a film should not be judged by its newsreel "texture" but by a more exacting criterion: the construction of its plot. The idea of plot here is a complex one. In a realist work social forces not only motivate episodes, so binding them together, but also motivate characters; and the characters, besides being



individuals, are also “types” embodying or representing these same forces. For the realist (as for Aristotle), the merit of a work of art lies in the way it imitates an action.

I therefore suspect the nature of Rossellini’s realism when he claims that he makes episodic films because he is bored by anything irrelevant to his desired sequence. The theme of *Paisa* (1946)—“the co-operation and clashing of human beings who are both individuals and at the same time representatives of important social tendencies” under the stress of war—is promisingly realistic; but by forgoing the sustaining power of plot Rossellini is unable to explore the significance of these encounters and their relevance to the crisis of 1944-45. All remains superficial. Anecdotes are too often chosen for their sensational value. What *real* point is there in the meeting of the G.I. and the prostitute or that of the padres and the monks? Even the over-praised sequence of the captured Americans watching the murder of the partisans has no more significance than that of horror at such a cold-blooded slaughter: too easily does Rossellini sacrifice the important political implications of the scene for the simpler strategies of shock.

This is just as obvious in *Roma: Città Aperta* (1945); though here, thanks to the dynamism of the plot, the “typicality” of the characters (the priest, the housewife, the partisan leaders are all syntheses of actual people) is made clear. Yet nothing comes of it, because Rossellini seems unable to explore the contradictions inherent in the various relationships. As Franco Valobra has written: “Everything is raised to the abstract ideal of liberty versus tyranny. But liberty from what and for what? And tyranny from what and for what?” Not only is the German intention unexplored but, more importantly: “Priest and communist die together, tricked by the same cruel enemy. But was the struggle the same for both of them?” Both priest and communist, he continues, use the same concept of liberty, patriotism and justice; each of them using the words in a different way, yet each of them unaware of this difference. Valobra then generously states that, as far as this film is concerned, it doesn’t matter that the confusion isn’t resolved since the film is only a faithful reflection of its time. Only later was the confusion seen in a tragic light.

Having recently seen *Il Generale delle Rovere* (1959), I don’t find myself as generous as Signor Valobra. At the climax of this cynical film the protagonist, a confidence trickster who, as a decoy, is posing as the General, is locked up with a number of men condemned to death by the Germans in order to find out which of them is a certain partisan leader. In discovering this man, the trickster undergoes a change of heart. Realising the seriousness of a war which until then he has been exploiting for his own gain, and realising that men are dying for ideals he respects, the trickster goes to the firing squad of his own free will, knowing that his martyrdom—in the guise of the General—will help the Allied cause. Yet what is the point of this decisive encounter? The trickster is converted by the partisans because they say they are willing to die for a better world. Yet what kind of better world? Rossellini gives us no idea. As they are shot, with a priest intoning beside them, he strongly implies that the better world of the partisans was an impossible, tragic hope: only the better world of the priest is to be trusted. Yet this solution is irrelevant . . . In *Rovere*, not only is there no attempt to comprehend the complex crisis of 1944-45; there is no intention of doing so.

Rossellini has always been more of a showman than an artist. The easy path of sensationalism has always been more attractive to him than the more difficult path of truth. Yet—unfortunately for him—he has always remained a bit of an artist, and therefore his powers as an entertainer have suffered.



“La Terra Trema”: the fisherman, ‘Ntoni.

I would see the ponderous expressionism of *Europa 51* and *Stromboli* as the result of this uneasy compromise.

Realism: *La Terra Trema*

HAS THE NEO-REALIST MOVEMENT then produced a realist film? Yes, I think it has. Boring and long, obscure and uncompromising, *La Terra Trema* (1948) is not only realistic; it is also the only neo-realist film to approach the condition of a masterpiece.

Ossessione (1943), Visconti’s previous film, is the ripe fruit of the naturalist tree, almost a parody. It is an operatic quintessence of Zola, Flaubert and the American dime novel: a splendid film, but as arbitrary in its episodes and relationships as *La Chienne*. *La Terra Trema* is quite different. The conflict between ‘Ntoni, the fisherman, and the wholesale dealers *does* cut to the central problems of a fishing community and so illuminates its workings; so that when ‘Ntoni throws the dealer’s scales—ironically like the scales of justice—into the sea, his action has an epic force. The village of Acitrezza is not mere scenery but a dynamic part of the action. ‘Ntoni and his family are conditioned by the house they live in; and their eviction from it is shown as a kind of death. Visconti doesn’t have to underline this point: it develops inevitably from the action. In a naturalist work, too, the *faraglioni* (sharp and dangerous rocks in the bay) would probably have been no more than a pretty motif. Here they are a necessary part of the totality of objects enacting the way of life of the characters and deciding their fate. And with the theme of social conflict is carried, with great ease, the theme of man breaking from myth (the submerging of personal identity into the identity of family and communal traditions) into history (man creating his own identity).

Most of Visconti’s films carry a museum of culture and anthropology on their backs. Here choreographic tendencies are disciplined by a ruthless concern for truth. Only at one point does Visconti seem to me irrelevantly aesthetic—when the family, destroyed, go to beg for work from the dealers. In their degradation they are dignified by gesture and stance so

that they appear, as André Bazin said, like Renaissance princes. Bazin praises this effect: to me, it seems like a failure. Stendhal has always been a great influence on Visconti; and here Stendhal's wishful thinking (admirably romantic) in allowing his corrupted heroes to remain undegraded, has had a bad effect on Visconti. I'm worried too by another failure in the film. It is not so much the simplicity of the situation—though to apply realism to the problems of a fishing community is easy compared with applying it to the problems of a complex urban society—as that Visconti's Marxist critique of Acitrezza gives us the feeling that he is dealing with a nineteenth century village, not a contemporary one. Despite Dolci's remarks about the sanctions against a Sicilian joining the Communist party, a frustrated man of 'Ntoni's initiative would surely have joined some group and not just wasted away. I feel, too, that Visconti should have explored the difficulties of the wholesale dealers, who are as much enmeshed in problems as the fishermen. The sly suggestion that they are Fascists, and indeed the whole way they are treated in the scene of degradation, is cheap.

Yet these flaws are minor. *La Terra Trema* is truly a realist film. Why, then, didn't it open up the way for a realist movement in Italy? One reason, certainly, is economic. In 1945–46 the Italian public favoured neo-realist films, but by 1946–47 they were turning towards escapism. In 1945–46 *Roma: Città Aperta* took 162 million lire (equivalent to 390 million lire now) at the box-office, while in 1948–49 *La Terra Trema* took only 35.8 million. (It is only fair to add that *Bicycle Thieves*, released in the same season, took 252 million.) Though *La Terra Trema* had the good fortune to win the Leone d'Oro at

Venice, it had the misfortune to be shown in Italy at the worst time of the year, at the end of summer. And then, as a film, it was too hard in its outlook, too obscure in its dialect, for the general public. The Italian lady overheard in a Roman drawing-room, saying that Italian films were doing Italy a lot of harm abroad by showing "the sordid side of life," and then suggesting to a director that as the Italian countryside was so lovely they should film that instead, echoed a general feeling.

It would be too easy to jibe at this woman. There *is* something wrong somewhere when a nobleman makes a film entirely about Sicilian fishermen; and the fault doesn't only lie with social conditions and the desire to expose social wrongs. I feel that Visconti (though perhaps to a lesser extent than his contemporaries) is trying in his work to escape from the complex issues of his own life; trying, in a way, to escape from the use of intelligence.

This, as I see it, is the problem facing the younger directors in Italy—and everywhere else, if it comes to that. Can realist films be made about the problems of intelligent people in an industrial society? Can that society be suitably described? Michelangelo Antonioni's suggestion that neo-realism can only develop by taking more interest in the private worlds and feelings of characters could be a way forward—and what I have seen of Antonioni's work seems to bear this out—though, as far as realism is concerned, there are dangers inherent in such an approach. Yet the problem is difficult: the most difficult one imaginable. For, when one considers how most of the few good realist films so far have been about inarticulate characters, one realises that until this problem is solved the cinema *literally* won't have achieved maturity.

The inarticulate hero corrupted: the rape scene in "Rocco and his Brothers".



Film Reviews

SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING

GENERALLY SPEAKING, there are two ways in which the British film-maker can treat life in Britain today. He can scratch its surface, or he can turn his back on it. Though directors like Val Guest and Joseph Losey are sometimes congratulated on doing the first, they are to all intents and purposes doing the second: even allowing for its quota quickie plot, there is something naggingly unreal about *The Criminal*, something evasive and self-indulgent, too, in Losey's gravitation to a prison milieu. As for the few films which have made the first grade (*Room at the Top*, *The Angry Silence*, *Look Back In Anger*, *The Entertainer*), there was still something contrived and journalistic about the first two; a hint of the histrionic about the Osborne adaptations.

Altogether more modest and straightforward, Karel Reisz, that least "documentary" of Free Cinema directors, now introduces a third method. And if *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (British Lion/Bryanston) proves to be a film of more lasting impression than its predecessors, then the reason will undoubtedly lie in Reisz's attempt to interpret the spirit behind a large part of British life today, as well as to reproduce its surface. Hence the distaste, not to say alarm, openly admitted by several older generation reviewers. For its script, adapted by Alan Sillitoe from his own novel, is inconclusive. Not only that, but it has an unrepentant hero who measures success in terms of wife-poaching, drink and dukey suits, who regards his parents level-headedly as "dead from the neck up," who actually dares to revel in life and the mischief he makes with dead rats and airgun pellets, and who ends up, not at the sinful Top (that at least would have been bearable) but throwing a stone at the housing estate where he plans to settle down at last and raise kids.

Reisz's main achievement, shared by his writer and his leading actor, Albert Finney, is the creation of a contemporary backyard-and-factory conscience. With more insight and instinct and spontaneity than Osborne and Tony Richardson, this trio has created a face, a voice, a habit of mind, true in every detail of a lifelong combatant against authority. With his jutting fighter's chin, drinker's jowl and watchful, moody eye, Finney exactly fulfils the part as written; with the tension and over-exuberance of inexperience, he somehow magnifies it into a figure brimming over with vitality, one who earns more and womanizes more than his mates, who prides himself on having everyone "summed up" and who frequently lies the same way he gambles, to put snap judgments to the test. The way he talks about everything, and about himself, and even to himself, is exactly right too; it is a portrait not without charm. So that the other characters, even when played by actors less obviously endemic to the Midlands than Finney, seem to respond with a similarly scrupulous honesty of being. Hylda Baker's shrewd aunt, Norman Rossington's cousin, above all Shirley Anne Field's quietly appealing, no-nonsense girl friend, have the same cardinal virtue of truth. If Rachel Roberts' married woman who must give up her lover and have his baby appears almost too poignant a cut-out against the strenuously unheroic tone of the rest, that is indirectly due to the heightening effect of compressing two of the novel's characters into one; the part is in fact beautifully played. Less satisfactory, though, is the handling of the potentially interesting figure of the passive husband, a dull stick here taken by the actor at Sillitoe's word; and the decline of Ma Bull, the street gossip, into an exploding balloon.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning holds one principally as the portrait of a dimly dawning conscience, a boy-into-man metamorphosis too consistently honest to permit false ironies or heroics. But it has other distinctions. As a piece of story-telling, for instance, it holds from the start, having gathered together all that is of value in



"Saturday Night and Sunday Morning".

Sillitoe's novel and discarded the excesses—the negro soldier, the half-wit girl from the stocking factory, that unconvincing abortion. The film's opening sequence, introducing lover, husband, wife and family, is brilliantly cut and dried in a matter of minutes, and from then on Reisz never loses his judgment of pace, whether accelerating with Finney's anger or defiance or come-uppance, in street, pub and whirling round Goose Fair; or decelerating in the love scenes and along the river bank. If at times the punch seems too mechanical (a slammed-down dustbin lid comes over as the least effective of several forceful linking devices), certain camera set-ups a shade obvious, this is a negligible price to pay for the good taste of the whole. (There are, in any case, plenty of felicities to highlight the overall impression of self-effacing decency: witness the pleasant shock of surprise at the end, when the camera pans left to reveal that the lovers' voices on the sound-track come not from that receding couple in long-shot, but from a second couple, our couple, seated in the foreground. And, for that matter, has any British director ever handled a fight, or a bedroom scene, with quite as much tact and yet candour?)

Of course, it can be argued that this is not a film "on a world level." Certainly it lacks the sublimity and universality of *Pather Panchali* and *Tokyo Story*; even Tony Richardson's films were less insistent than *Saturday Night* on absolute authenticity of surface detail, being after something altogether more profound and fundamental. I'm not sure, though, that it's an argument that gets you very far. There has always been something notoriously inbred and exclusive about the British which tugs against the broader, deeper expressions of feeling—against, if you like, universality. And for all the originality achieved by *Look Back* and *The Entertainer*, they didn't—marred as they were by subjective falsity—carry that supremely genuine quality which stamps *Saturday Night* as a first-rate work of art. Why, in any case, should not the Nottingham wilderness of trade-marked houses and digital smokestacks be as likely a setting for important truths as Tokyo or Taormina? It would be a great pity if our sensibilities, our standards of what is major and minor art, should continue to be directed, despite the example of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, by sophisticates and romantics, sceptics and theorists, of every shade and hue. Reisz's great virtue lies in his obvious disinclination to put a quart into a pint pot; his promise in the way in which he has brought to a provincial British film qualities of natural charm: a charm, furthermore, which remains valid under the keenest scrutiny. Grant us more such "minor" films and directors. Then, and—in the context of contemporary British cinema—only then, can we start asking for something "major."

PETER JOHN DYER



"La Dolce Vita": the "haunted castle" sequence.

LA DOLCE VITA

"THE OLD BOHEMIAN way of life is dead," said Fellini, describing his latest film. "Once there used to be a community of would-be artists all living their day-to-day existence together. But now the new Bohemia is a conglomeration of journalists, photographers and café society, all buzzing about in motor cars. It's another world completely." *La Dolce Vita* (Columbia) is an attempt to pin down this new world in terms as urgent and ephemeral as "a filmed newspaper"; and though the result is too often an uneasy marriage between a ladies' journal and the gutter press, the way Fellini has set about it is interesting. Discarding the more conventional idea of plot, he takes his hero Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni), aptly a gossip columnist, and plunges him into the turbulence of this new Bohemia. By describing Marcello at work, Fellini is able to give us a panorama of those who lead "the easy life."

The freedom of this picaresque narrative allowed Fellini the greatest fluency in shooting the film, so that up to the last moment he was able to improvise dialogue and situations and to insert or cut sequences in quite an arbitrary manner. There are dangers, however, in this method; for though the off-the-cuff technique is a familiar one, especially in the Italian cinema, in feature films it is seldom successful. It is too easy for a director, using it without a clear and dynamic approach to his material, to turn out nothing more than sentimental fantasies. The reason is obvious. The artist is no camera. He is an interpreter involved in his material and continually discriminating—in this sense art is always didactic—and this discrimination is a hard, thoughtful job, not easily improvised. Fellini's attempt therefore to catch spontaneously "the way life is" can be seen as naive. In his mannered film characters are reduced to caricatures and presented with a finality and a cruelty reminiscent of Ben Jonson's 'humorous' types. But where in Jonson there is a moral intention behind these reductions, in Fellini there is nothing at all: his characters remain the callow clichés of the gossip column.

For three hours Rome is shown to us as a tripper's paradise. A troupe of prostitutes, business men, tranvestites and aristocrats

twirls across the screen, both ridiculed and glamorised at the same time; as in the gossip column, we are asked to be indignant at their scandalous behaviour and yet fully to enjoy it. For instance, a millionaire's daughter (brilliantly played by Anouk Aimée) takes Marcello to a prostitute's house and there sleeps with him. The only point of this sequence seems to be to excite and shock the more conservative-minded members of the audience. In fact, and for rather a sad reason, this shock-tactic misfires entirely.

Fellini's films have always been without sensuality. Androgynous men and women populate his world of twilight moods, often quite at variance with the story (the prostitutes of *Cabiria* could not have been more sexless). Significantly the clown, that unhappy neutral uneasily trying to fit into a world of flesh-and-blood, has always been his favourite character. In earlier films, where the erotic was relatively unimportant, this sensibility was often coolly effective; but in *La Dolce Vita*, which is in the main a study of sexual manners, it is disastrous. In the film's innumerable love scenes there is a continual straining after effect; and the result is a curiously abstract quality, almost of sex in blueprint. There are moments indeed when one feels that if Aunt Edna had talent she would have made a film like this.

And yet there is a kind of honesty about the film which suggests that it is more than an example of misplaced showmanship. It is in fact a very personal, non-intellectual reaction to a milieu Fellini knows well, and on an aesthetic level it is unusually persuasive in the way he intended—as "a kind of baroque game". Martelli's exciting camera-work, Gherardi's mood-evoking sets, and Rota's clever score all help him to build up swirling images which surge forward in a compelling rhythm. And there is a visual wit too: the camera cuts from a statue of Christ to a dancer in a cabaret dressed as Buddha; Marcello chases the illusive film star Sylvia (Anita Ekberg), dressed as a priest, up through the dome of St. Peter's; and there is a scene as good as anything in *Brideshead Revisited* when, after a night of debauchery, the tired aristocrats wander through the Prince's park and meet the family priest on his way to early mass. They pause as he looks at them sternly; then some of them sheepishly follow him while the others turn dispiritedly away.

These effects, however, do not bear much analysis; and it is clear that for a film with the pretensions of *La Dolce Vita* a purely aesthetic approach is inadequate. One sees this most obviously in the final sequence. A half-hearted orgy, in which a circus of case-book types run through their acts, breaks up at dawn; and, transformed, the girls like dryads drift through pine trees down to the sea. (This Botticellian caprice has no relevance to the action and is inserted, typically, because it is pretty.) Reaching the water, the orgiasts see some fishermen pulling in a large and ominous object (Wilma Montesi?) which turns out to be a bloated fish. This monster is supposed to be, rather vaguely, a symbol of despair—its glassy eye is an answer to the riddle of the universe—and the characters react appropriately. Then Marcello turns away and sees across a stream a girl he'd previously called "as beautiful as an Umbrian angel," and who inadequately represents the life of innocence, of home cooking and early bedtime. She calls to Marcello, but her voice is carried away by the wind . . .

This ending is of course unmotivated. As so often in Fellini's films there is here a shift from an ethical problem to an aesthetic effect. And though art by its very metaphorical (and therefore illogical) nature is usually dishonest, one really asks to be cheated a little more intelligently . . . Fellini admits to having a confused sense of values, to being as uncertain as a child. Why then does he try to make realist films? It's a great pity; for if *La Dolce Vita* had been less grandiose and more private and personal it might have worked.

ERIC RHODE

ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS

IT IS WELL-KNOWN that Visconti's *La Terra Trema* was conceived as the first part of a trilogy of Sicilian life. The last two parts, for which financial backing was never found, were to deal with the miners and the agricultural workers respectively. Visconti himself owns that *Rocco and his Brothers* is linked in his mind with *La Terra Trema*. But between the relatively simple poetic realism of the twelve-year-old film and the new one's stylistic, almost operatic, imitation of life there is a vast difference—greater perhaps than the director himself is prepared to acknowledge.

Certainly *Rocco*, like *La Terra Trema*, reflects one of Italy's most urgent problems: the gulf which separates the urban, industrial North from the impoverished South and the difficulties of adjustment on the part of the constant trail of migrants, who differ so widely in temperament and outlook from the prosperous northerners. These tensions are perceptively indicated in the script by Suso Cecchi d'Amico, whose name is the leading one among five attributed screenwriters.

A widow—a kind of Southern Mother Courage—arrives with her brood in Milan, where one of her sons, Vincenzo, is already installed. On Vincenzo all the family's hopes are pinned. He will lead them through this baffling new world and into its glittering prosperity. But Vincenzo is far from securely established himself and the family is left to its own devices. Simone drifts into the treacherous boxing world and into an association with a prostitute; he enjoys a brief professional glory which he is too naive to consolidate, and his fall is as headlong as his rise was meteoric. Rocco, upright and angelic, is finally forced to take up the boxing profession he despises in order to support the family and to pay Simone's debts: he is the true victim. Ciro, the third brother, becomes a mechanic at Alfa Romeo and is absorbed into the petit bourgeois life. There remains young Luca—the only one who may eventually find the way and the means to return with honour to the forsaken homeland.

A family saga, then, which in its form calls to mind (to quote Wilde's Cecily) "one of the three volume novels that Mudie sends us." A formal attempt is made to subdue the material by subdividing it into five episodes, one for each of the brothers. But, compelling though the subject matter is, the sheer weight of its three-hour duration implies a more profound investigation of relationships and milieu than is finally the case.

The key to the whole film lies in the relationship between Simone and Rocco, and it is here at the centre that the director's divided intentions are found. Simone, the family's pride, from his eager arrival in Milan, jaw agape with avid, provincial amazement, to his murderer's end in the gutter, loathing life and even his family, is shown with relentless clarity. (Here Visconti's genius for plumbing unsuspected depths in his actors is astonishing, and under his guidance Renato Salvatori, hitherto merely a romantic teen-age favourite, gives a superb performance.) But Rocco, the opposing

force, remains an idealised conception, a blurred angel, narcissistically played (with apparent connivance on Visconti's part) by Alain Delon. His goodness remains a mystic, romantic simplification and Nino Rota's rather banal "theme music for lovers" underlines this as a deliberate interpretation. In the same romantic groove is the sequence of the prostitute's temporary redemption through her pure love for Rocco, the idyll which touches off Simone's fury.

Although these romantic indulgences considerably soften the film's centre and rob it of the full impact of its classical climax (the discovery by the family of Simone's guilt inspires a frenzy of emotion akin to Greek tragic agonies), the work still exercises a sustained fascination. Visconti's authority, even at its most wilful, is never in doubt. Nothing is left to chance: the fastidious details of the interiors (the perverted boxing promoter's opulent lair, the family's apartments from peeling basement to respectable, tasteless modern flat); the superbly photographed exteriors by Giuseppe Rotunno, notably the Milanese wasteland and the desolate lakeside site for the murder; and the flawless performances—of Annie Girardot as the prostitute, Katina Paxinou (dubbed most subtly) as the matriarch and Paolo Stoppa as the boxing trainer who despairs of his job but loves it devotedly. All these things and many more reflect the precise demands of a dedicated perfectionist.

As I said earlier, the film is divided into five episodes, each of them being prefaced by the name of a brother. The final episode, which comes after Simone's violent climax, is necessarily an anti-climax, a coda. Luca's episode is relatively brief; but, prefaced as it is by his name, it gives an impression of 'beginning again' at a time when one is emotionally drained. Its place in the argument is undeniable: Luca is the family's hope of redemption, its regeneration. Dramatically, however, it is not satisfying. It is only in retrospect, in the whole film formally recalled, that one grasps its relevance. Its balanced place in the film's primal conception has been obscured by romantic proliferation.

Rocco, in fine is a work which shows Visconti addicted both to romantic melodrama and to contemporary social drama. It is through his own prodigious conviction and authority that these elements can be reconciled without arousing a fatal mistrust.

DEREK PROUSE

JALSAGHAR and THE WORLD OF APU

THE WORLD-WIDE ACCLAIM given to Satyajit Ray's Bengali trilogy has tended to overshadow his other films, none of which has received much of a showing in the West. In the case of *The Philosopher's Stone*, a mild comedy made as a commercial intermezzo, the loss is negligible; but *Jalsaghar* or *The Music Room* (made before *Apu*) was fobbed off with a minor prize at the 1959 Moscow Festival and then mysteriously disappeared. Fortunately, after two attempts, *Jalsaghar* was captured for last year's London Festival. Although it cannot be said to outclass the best parts of the trilogy, it proves to be an engrossing experiment in a deliberately minor key.

First, we are shown the lined, worn, slightly selfish face of an elderly man; then the camera pulls back to reveal the setting: a decrepit mansion stranded in the middle of an arid semi-desert and bounded by a sea. Its owner, an ageing nobleman, is approaching the threat of final bankruptcy with calm disdain and the stubborn pride that comes with a long family tradition. Now that his wife and son are dead, his only pleasure is to surround himself with the finest dancers and musicians of the time, and his *soirées* not only serve to testify to the perfection of his taste but act as a protest against a world given over to commerce and greed. The portrait of this man is built up from a series of small incidents, moments of observation: we see him roaming over his declining estate, remembering and reminiscing; then the camera discreetly creeps up on him as he sits on the verandah, listening to his beloved music and wincing as the outside world, with its trains, cars and generators, intrudes into his withdrawn, private existence. Ray's use of music, incidentally, is far removed from the customary Indian score—here everything has a classical severity with many subtle vocal and instrumental complexities. In the film's finest scene, when the old man relinquishes his last rupees to pay for a famous dancer, Ray's handling gives the episode a double richness. The dance itself is outstandingly beautiful, caught in a long take which emphasises the intensity and passion of the dancer's movements. Then, as the camera passes to the nobleman, reclining on his cushion and sucking his pipe, the combination of music and aesthetic enjoyment serves as an apotheosis of his whole life.



"Jalsaghar": the Indian nobleman.

This, then, is Ray's most romantic film, almost Gothic in its concentration on the crumbling spiritual and physical façade of its protagonist's existence. In it, Ray seems to be recording the loss of a certain kind of purity and idealism, but the comment is made without sentimentality. And there is no bitterness either—even the nobleman's *nouveau riche* rival is given a faintly ridiculous yet not unsympathetic pomposity. The gentle sadness and humour of the story sometimes bring it near to a Chekhovian tempo; certainly it is some distance from the eager striving forward of the *Apu* trilogy. But, despite the difference in subject matter, the style belongs unmistakably to Ray. Again, there is the atmospheric concentration on sounds and objects (a spider suddenly appearing on the nobleman's portrait, distant lightning flashing across a room), here used to re-create a crumbling world. In this respect, Ray has received excellent support from his usual collaborators. Banshi Chandra Gupta's décor (notably the music room itself, with its flaking columns and echoing musical ghosts) and Subatra Mitra's images of the bare landscape, with the sole remaining horse and elephant roaming idly in the midday dust, work towards an entirely unified mood.

Jalsaghar acts as a kind of bridge between the trilogy, with its universal appeal, and the more enclosed Indian cinema from which Ray revolted. In some ways it remains his most Indian film: the contemplative stillness of certain scenes is likely to prove too demanding for most Western audiences; several of the performances, including that of Chabi Biswas (a veteran stage professional) as the nobleman, are marred by the heavy make-up and over-emphasis of the commercial Indian film; and the final horse ride across the beach is most unconvincingly staged. Yet these are minor flaws in a work whose radiance places it firmly in the select list of the cinema's "chamber music."

In *The World of Apu* (Contemporary) we find the same intimacy, this time framed within a larger structure—Apu goes out into the world, marries, loses his wife and wanders aimlessly until he recovers both himself and his son. *Apu* is not only the logical last act of the trilogy but a unique work in its own right, in which Ray reveals his personal artistic gains and losses since *Pather Panchali*. The chief gain is an even richer feeling for relationships between people, expressed through a style again dependent on a careful accumulation of selected details. So, in the film's central section concerning Apu's life with his new bride, love is crystallised through a glance, a movement, the placing of a head on a shoulder. Because Ray resolutely refuses to force the pace or the emotion, this is one of the most beautiful love affairs in all cinema; and the tragedy that follows has all the anguish of the blow Apu gives to the messenger who brings the news.

The losses are more difficult to categorise, since they largely

depend on individual preferences and prejudices. For myself, they are to be found in the more consciously sophisticated editing style, in a few under-directed scenes near the beginning of the film and in the episode when Apu destroys his manuscript. Here Ray comes nearest to providing a stylistic set piece. Ravi Shankar's music and the glittering images of forest and mountain combine to underline the moment of defeat, yet the effect is a little worked out and academic. Ray's stature as an artist lies in the fact that he does not (or did not) need this kind of heightened statement to intensify his style. In striving for it, he has forsaken a little of the unforced expressiveness which still makes *Pather Panchali* his supreme achievement.

In other respects, however, *Apu* illustrates how backgrounds can be used to emphasise the central drama. Ray's groupings and Mitra's photography (which has improved steadily throughout the trilogy) bring a masterly density to a scene, whether it is Apu's grimy Calcutta lodgings, the romantic river journey near the beginning or the parched and desolate landscape in which Apu and his friend Pulu meet. Echoes of the two preceding films can be found in an equally precise use of sound: the trains, once a symbol of release in *Pather Panchali*, become hissing monsters in *Apu* and the track constantly emphasises the rushing of water and the crying of babies. These sights and sounds are absorbed by Ray into his vision of an ever-recurring life force, in the same way that Apu is himself triumphant at the end. The final partial reconciliation between father and son is rightly made both difficult and inevitable. Apu has to fight himself before victory can be gained: it would have been unbearable if he had failed.

I have avoided using phrases like "poetic truth" in this review, because they have been over-indulged in some quarters until they have become devalued. But, on looking back on the work of Satyajit Ray, how else can one describe the forest scenes with the children in *Pather Panchali*, the mother's death in *Aparajito*, Aparna's farewell in *The World of Apu*, the final dance in *Jalsaghar*? These are the creations of a film-maker with an artistic sensibility rarely found in the cinemas of any country. He has emerged from an industry dedicated almost entirely to the perpetuation of fifth-rate ideas, but his influence has now spread and he is no longer an isolated pioneer. During the past year, news has filtered through of vigorous developments, especially in the Bengali cinema, and the first film of a new director, *Baishey Sravana*, was warmly praised by some critics at last year's Venice Festival. Ray has now won his battle: it will be a pity if his followers are involved in a similar fight for recognition in their own country as well as overseas.

JOHN GILLET

THE SUNDOWNERS

THE MOOD OF *The Sundowners* (Warner-Pathé) is a highly durable tone: the romantic pastoral, with its suggestions of space, physical effort, rough country living planed down smoothly enough for the consumption of the lending libraries and the urban Odeons. Its setting is Australia thirty years ago, here meaning rather more than just a shift in location for a Western and a different brand of livestock. The director, Fred Zinnemann, has felt a sense of the place and worked to convey it: the absence of tension in personal relations, the wild gambling, the beer drinking and cockney humour.

His story concerns a family of three, the husband (Robert Mitchum) a natural wanderer, bored by stability and possessions, the wife (Deborah Kerr) and son (Michael Anderson, Jr.) longing for settled tranquillity. They pin him down for a few reluctant weeks, while he earns enough as a sheep-shearer to make the farm they want a practical possibility; and then the money is gambled away in an evening and back they go to the trail and the wagon. Accompanying them is an improbably well-spoken and adventurous remittance man, whom Peter Ustinov plays with his unshakable air of sulky amusement, of having long ago decided to make the philosophical best of a bad job. Episodically rambling, the story is knotted together in spurts of action: a forest fire on the trail, a sheep-shearing contest (neatly done, with a wizened gnome in his eighties winning hands down from a Mitchum doubled up with exhaustion), a gambling session, a horse race. Out of this leisurely cross-country progression of incidents comes the sense not of a poetic landscape but of a countryside scaled down to the dimensions of the people who inhabit it.

The pattern of a film like *The Sundowners* has been established, one feels, almost before the picture itself goes into production. It will be long (upwards of two and a half hours in this case); its

locations will be used to effect, and at the same time over-exploited, so that bounding kangaroos and koalas will convey slightly the sense of a travelling menagerie; its performances will be likeable (Deborah Kerr, in particular, is agreeably ready to grapple argumentatively with any situation) and its direction solid. Zinnemann, with his disciplined craftsmanship and feeling for the unstressed details of behaviour, has lifted its sights a few notches: there is a kind of expansive generosity in his attitude to the film's easy-going people and their world of isolated sheep stations, rowdy pubs and back country race meetings.

But the sizable limitations remain. *The Sundowners* carries leisureliness to a point where it becomes self-defeating. There is not nearly enough in the film that *has* to be there, and far too much that is there merely to hold the straying eye. With no reason to compress, there is rather too much of everything—too many landscapes and sheep and kangaroos; too many of Peter Ustinov's rueful aphorisms; and too many sequences which are allowed to dawdle indeterminately rather than to make a clear, firm point. In this, of course, *The Sundowners* is not alone. Ten years or so ago, when Zinnemann, making films like *Act of Violence* and *The Men*, was one of a group of rising talents, the Hollywood cinema had a muscular hardness and energy unmatched elsewhere. One cannot think of a single director of Zinnemann's generation (which is not that of the veterans, the Fords and Hitchcocks) who has managed to keep these qualities going through a run of big pictures.

A director like Zinnemann, with his sense of responsibility to the medium he works in, seems in a sense especially vulnerable. The personality has not changed since the early films, though *The Sundowners* somewhat subdues its sophistication, but the resources are entirely different. It is notoriously more difficult to make cogent, observant, exact films for a few million dollars than for a few hundred thousand. And this, one feels, is a problem which directors of this standing in Hollywood have got to admit and recognise: how, within the framework of their own industry, to make a two and a half hour film say as much, as directly, as one running a tight ninety minutes; how to put an edge back into commercial but serious cinema. After the compact car, we need the compact film: the Cadillacs of the screen are getting too unwieldy for comfort.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

In Brief

TUNES OF GLORY (*United Artists*), though concerned with the British Army, treats of topics adult enough to preserve it generally from the familiar extremes of sang-froid heroics, non-commissioned humour and empire-carving. Its basic situation—the clash between a battalion's new commanding officer and his slack, eccentric predecessor—can be found in similar terms in every walk of life. But here it is heightened by confining the action largely to the closed society of a bleak Scottish regimental depot, and in particular to the officers' mess with its oppressive furnishings, martial relics and atmosphere of boorish camaraderie. The retiring C.O., Sinclair, is an unattractive mixture of easy-going discipline on parade and crude defensive bluster in his dealings with his officers, who unlike him have achieved commissions through Sandhurst rather than the pipe band. Alec Guinness, red-wigged and moustached, swaggers through the part with fiery and raffish gusto, though not much interior conviction. John Mills brings an edgy dignity and severity to the newcomer, Barrow, fresh from the War Office. James Kennaway's screenplay, based on his novel, is at its best in developing the conflict between the two men: the awkwardness at Barrow's arrival during a wild mess party; the enforcement of petty rules culminating in early morning classes to teach the officers to dance like gentlemen; Barrow's neurotic outburst when they get out of line at the first formal party (though it is a pity this is followed by that hoary device of showing feelings being released in a mad car ride).

Up to Barrow's final collapse, which comes after he has been persuaded to deal leniently with Sinclair for striking a soldier, Ronald Neame's direction neatly pinpoints the successive incidents to reveal the growing tension and intrigue within the mess as Barrow realises their contempt for his apparent weakness. But the man's loss of self-confidence is never really built up; at least not with the kind of analytical power that might have made his solution—suicide—believable. There is a fatal hint of sentimentality. This

short-cut to an easy ending is especially regrettable in a subject so fully worth exploring, where the art director (Wilfred Shingleton) and the cameraman (Arthur Ibbetson) have so well caught authentic backgrounds, and where most events hitherto, bar two sketchy box-office love affairs, have been relevant and intriguing. The ending itself is inexcusable. Neame and Guinness are not, to put it mildly, at their ease in portraying Sinclair's own mental breakdown, and the scene is far less one of tragic remorse than gauche contrived emotionalism. Though the emphasis throughout has been on the unsettled natures of those set in command, the final message is seemingly the value of charitable loyalty, as the officers, repenting their treatment of Barrow, gently escort the weeping Sinclair home.—TERENCE KELLY

NEVER ON SUNDAY (*United Artists*). Jules Dassin's latest film opens on a promisingly wicked note of satire. A ship docking at Piraeus with a cargo of tourists is greeted by a knot of swimmers—dock workers who have leaped into the water fully clothed after Ilya, the most independent and popular prostitute on the waterfront, who is taking her morning swim, not so fully clothed. Watching from the ship, a middle-aged, professorial American sees the laughing swimmers clustered round Ilya, murmurs, "There is the purity that was Greece," and ecstatically scribbles a note in his pocket book.

But making fun of tourists is not Dassin's main concern. Homer, the donnish Hellenist from the ship, meets Ilya in a dockside café and instantly sees her as a symbol. "You are the whole world, beautiful and corrupt." But, declares Homer, "... a whore can't be happy. A whorish world can't be happy." Ilya, however, *is* happy. She has worked out a way of living which enables her to translate all the sorrow of the world into gaiety; she even provides the ancient Greek tragedies with happy endings. The pedantic Homer is outraged. He assures Ilya that Medea kills her children, that Oedipus goes into exile, blind and accursed, and Ilya's simple pleasure in the plays is destroyed. Homer then decides to reform her, to make her appreciate the things of the mind. At this point, however, Dassin is faced with the collapse of his plot. The only relationship portrayed is the "Pygmalion" story of Homer and Ilya; yet, having shown Ilya's disillusionment over the tragedies, Dassin has let out the secret of his ending. He therefore reduces the sequence of educating Ilya to a montage, abandoning his personal story just at the point where it should become most lively. The rest of the film is an ordinary little fairy tale about a racketeer who collects exorbitant rents from the prostitutes, and indirectly causes Homer's scheme to fail. Ilya finds her true love in a dock worker; and the pocket book tumbles into the Aegean in the wake of Homer's departing ship.



"Never on Sunday": Melina Mercouri, Georges Foundas.

The intellectual coherence of Dassin's script is never matched by a convincingly tight dramatic structure. There are some delightful moments of comic imagination—streets filled with the beds of rebellious tarts, a pop gramophone record kept like a store of illicit liquor behind rows of learned books. But the overall result is a curious mixture of abstract wit and light-headed romantic comedy. Melina Mercouri, all flashing eyes and glittering teeth, personifies sex and plays outrageously to the audience. Jules Dassin himself is agreeably amateurish as the ardent academic, Homer. For all its cheerfully slapdash appearance, the film is technically a shrewd piece of cinema—smart, but not too clever for the middle-brow public, risqué but not shocking, diverting but not disturbing. Nevertheless, it leaves the impression that Shaw could have done it all better. And did.—KENNETH CAVANDER

NOT LONG AGO SOMEONE patented an invention for transmuting the sounds of music into colours. *JAZZ ON A SUMMER'S DAY* (Hillcrest) puts one in mind of it, because if there are colours which represent jazz it captures them exquisitely. The film's compositions are *contemporary*—reminiscent of an animated collection of record sleeves: two musicians swaying gently against a misty background of pale green; long-shots of the pink-lit dais framed in the dark; Face to Face close-ups of Thelonius Monk looking rapt behind bamboo sunglasses.

It is not surprising if the film is most memorable for a series of outstanding compositions. It was made by Bert Stern, a stills photographer until he made *Jazz on a Summer's Day*. The setting is the Newport Jazz Festival. All the stars are there. Chico Hamilton. Gerry Mulligan. Anita O'Day (who was on the sound-track of *Pull My Daisy*) squeezes the last, high-pitched, provocative "ee-ee" out of "Te-ea" in *Tea for Two*. She has perfect audience control, and a brilliant technique with the mike—addressing it as though it were a lover whom she is trying to soften up. Diana Washington, vast and nonchalant, wears a dress that looks like a freshly laundered paper bag. Louis Armstrong, as ever, jokes it up. Sal Salvador closes his eyes and listens intently to his own guitar. And the comforting Mahalia Jackson, clad for gospelling in white lace, greets riotous applause with "Shucks, you make me feel like I'm a star." Few films about jazz treat their subject with less cant than this one. This is photography that has the perfect feel of jazz, and beyond that leaves it alone.

Shots of the audience point up devotees no more than lookers-on. Reactions vary from ecstasy to boredom to simple concentration on

Coke or ham sandwich. Occasionally there is a wry matching up of audience and music—like one contrast between prim and beat when a startled old lady enters to the strains of Dixieland. The background is a glorious summer's day. Not far away the America Cup yachting races are on: sea and jazz meet in shots of beautiful yachts, with spinnakers billowing over a jazz soundtrack; or with single musicians outlined against gold and purple seascapes.

The flaws stem largely from a hand-held camera, and a tendency (natural in a stills photographer) to be static. But the atmosphere is right—jazz, just jazz.—PHILLIP RILEY

HOLLYWOOD ON THE SIDE of freedom, and the men who fight and die for it, can be very open to misinterpretation. Of this *SPARTACUS* (Rank) gives a spectacular reminder by letting American actors speak up for the revolutionaries on the cross, and a British contingent for the Romans who nailed them there. The Anglo-Romans win hands down. To compound this ideological reverse, executive producer Kirk Douglas—who himself plays history's and Howard Fast's heroic slave-general with the ulcer-ridden preoccupation proper to a latter-day Hollywood tycoon—has signed up a director, Stanley Kubrick, notable for his insight into stark Freudian tensions, and a blacklist writer, Dalton Trumbo, whose highly emotional brand of Left-thinking goes back to Roosevelt and the New Deal. The result, to all intents and purposes, is pre-ordained. Freedom is represented by eve of battle visits to the troops, nude bathing scenes, babies, aged peasant faces, trysts in forest glades, Super Technirama-70 rides across sunset horizons, and a heroine (Jean Simmons) shot in romantically gauzy close-ups; its intercommunication with art by one of those noble brotherhood relationships between the poet Antoninus (Tony Curtis) and Spartacus which can only be sundered by death and a fervent kiss; and Rome by a bisexual dictator (Laurence Olivier) who inquires of the body-slave (Tony Curtis again) bathing him whether his taste runs to both oysters and snails. Apart from Olivier's voluptuous, power-crazed Crassus, played in something of this actor's Richard III manner (even to the same low-key lighting for battle tent interiors), Rome can boast a jovial, cynical, blood-curdling demagogue from Yorkshire in Charles Laughton's Gracchus; and Peter Ustinov on an ad-libbing spree as a gladiator-fancier. To these pleasures might be added a few fine shots of pre-battle array, and Irving Lerner's cutting of the lethal gladiator scenes: nothing, however, exactly calculated to advance any claims *Spartacus* may have to be "a film which stands up for life". Even darling Nina Foch's petulant Roman lady is an advanced case of death-wish.—PETER JOHN DYER

A BREATH OF SCANDAL (Paramount). When Hollywood's view of the Hungarian scene embodies Yul Brynner as a gallant, glass-chewing Russian, and Anouk Aimée as one of a band of wild revolutionaries who make a martyr out of him, one knows better than to show surprise. The decline of a subject like Ferenc Molnár's *Olympia*, however, a lively and theatrically effective satire on the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, into the characterless insignificance of *A Breath of Scandal*, is nothing short of mysterious. (So is the absence of a screenplay credit; the late Sidney Howard is listed instead as the play's adaptor.) In the original, the beautiful, flirtatious princess autocratically calls her suitor, a virile captain of hussars, a peasant. He retaliates by arousing her ardour and then, avenging his wounded pride in an ironic finale, leaves her. The backdrop to this tense battle of the sexes, with its slightly coffee-house flavoured social attitude, is a brilliant satire on the high society of the period. The film, by comparison, reminds one of nothing so much as a poor man's *Gigi*, played out against a sort of snapshot album labelled Views of Old Vienna. The fragile princess has become a curvaceous rustic beauty, the hussar a poor but handsome American booby whose rigidly chaste persistence wins through in the end. A dispirited Michael Curtiz (yes, there *has* to be a Hungarian director for a script in which a Sandor appears) obediently tracks in, to music, at the beginning of scenes and out at the end, otherwise leaving his all-star polyglot cast to their own devices. This seems specially hard on Sophia Loren, in any case not an ideal choice for a princess, who obviously still needs the help of a Lumet or a Cukor in sharpening the finer points of her comedy technique. For the rest, John Gavin is too much the ramrod to make anything vital of the American, Maurice Chevalier sings *A Smile in Vienna* with a defiantly Gallic grin, and it is left to Isabel Jeans to chatter and grimace and coax her role into a solitary little diamond of wit and style. The scenery is beautiful.—ROBERT VAS



"Spartacus": Charles Laughton (Gracchus) and John Gavin (Caesar).



"I Aim at the Stars": Herbert Lom, Curd Jürgens.

A HERO OF OUR TIMES

PETER DAVIS

ONLY THE MOST DETERMINED prospector could find undiscovered cinematic treasures in *I Aim at the Stars*. The special quality of film is attained only once in this picture, with the shot of a rocket's tail-flame burning in the darkness of the heavens; but this is concealed behind the credit titles and nothing in the rest of the film lives up to its promise. The director, J. Lee Thompson, had no apparent confidence that his chosen subject would sufficiently grip an audience; and so he has banked on a sensationalised script. The search for the melodramatic is revealed in his technique by the use of a score that is a debased version of Holst's "Planets"; by an agonising use of the shock-cut; and by his inability to hold a shot for more than the minimum time without a cut. He has apparently argued, at one point, that if a ten second count-down is suspenseful, then a thirty second count-down must be three times as suspenseful. Unfortunately, he proves that the multiplication works inversely.

If the film is so mediocre, why bother to criticise it at all? The answer is that the subject matter—the rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, one-time inventor of the buzz-bomb and V-2 and now leader of the American team in the space Olympic Games—is of such importance that we cannot afford *not* to pay attention to the film. Moreover, the picture is of a type that we should be especially wary about: the fiction film that masquerades as documentary.

If we can brush aside the complications of love-interest, spy-intrigue and phoney excitement that cobweb the film, it is possible to distinguish its core. This is an attempt to deal with the problem of von Braun, and even to universalise this problem; but it evidences a schizophrenia not in the person of the scientist himself—nothing could be more single and simple than the motivation of his every action—but in the American nation as a whole.* On the one side we have the emotions of patriotism; of the flattering confirmation of the American

individualist ideal as exemplified in this success story of a man winning out against all odds; and the Romance of Science and Technology (see the film's title). All these things are part of American mythology. Against these are placed the affront to moral values that the narrative evidences: the story of a scientist so obsessed with his goal that he is indifferent to what means he uses to attain it, careless of what human misery he may cause; a man who, in the words of von Braun's chief antagonist in the film, the ex-Intelligence Officer Taggart, "does not accept responsibility." *I Aim at the Stars* is an attempt to work out once again the old American dilemma, which can be traced back to the original Puritan settlers, of the conflict between Capitalism and Christianity. In how many American films do we see these two irreconcilables reach an uneasy compromise?

I Aim at the Stars is offered as a balm to the American conscience with regard to von Braun. The American people would fain like von Braun, for they owe a great deal to him in matters of defence and prestige. There is only the delicate matter of the scientist's Nazi past to prevent unqualified admiration. *I Aim at the Stars* sets out to justify this past and to win our sympathy for von Braun as a person. The fact that the scientist was a member of the Nazi Party is explained as being the only way he could be sure of getting the support he needed for his experiments. He is shown speaking out openly against the Party and its leader, and this nearly costs him his life—so the film says. The part of the scientist is played by Curd Jürgens, which inevitably means that our liking for this actor is unconsciously extended to the living person he portrays—as we like Napoleon all the more when he looks like Brando. Altogether, the conception of the character of Wernher von Braun that this film gives us is that of the modern American ideal, the new, young and outwardly immaculate Successman, as typified by Nixon and Kennedy.

Clearly, however, people cannot be persuaded as easily as that: part of the case against von Braun has to be presented, if only to make the final acquittal the more convincing. A character is created who, in the Morality Play tradition,

**I Aim at the Stars* was made in West Germany and therefore rates technically as a German film. Its producer, however, and much of its financial backing are American.

personifies Conscience. (Von Braun dubs him his own conscience at the film's end, but much more correctly is he the conscience of the American people. Von Braun himself never appears conscience-stricken in the film, although in real life he is credited with saying that he is sorry for the V-bombs that fell on England.) This character is Taggart, the Intelligence Officer turned reporter, who hounds von Braun throughout the film with reminders of the past.

By allowing this character to voice objections to von Braun and his work, the film secures for itself an air of fairness. "This is the evidence for and against, with no punches pulled; judge for yourself," the director seems to be intimating. But the give-away is in the personal pronoun of the title, which reveals whose side the film is really on. Ultimately, the attainment of the film's objective depends upon the way it projects the personality of von Braun—personalities are so much more persuasive than abstract moral arguments. Curd Jürgens dare-devilling for science, Curd Jürgens cracking jokes, exploding against Hitler, or at home arguing with a TV set, Curd Jürgens proposing and in a love scene with his wife—all these "little human things" win sympathy for Wernher von Braun. And his antagonist loses sympathy by the fact that his hatred of von Braun has a personal motive—his wife and child were killed by a V-2—so that his moral stand is weakened by elements of a personal vendetta. Besides, people want to forget the war, and anyone who remembers it is guilty of bad taste.

The most decisive factor in von Braun's favour, however, is not so much the screen character as something which people knew about and approved even before seeing the film: his occupation. He is a Pioneer of Science, and thus entitled to the emotional response provoked by that title. Urged by his wife to tell the American public about space travel the way he tells it to her, von Braun replies, "Lord knows, I'm a practical scientist, not a poet, but . . ." Then, to the accompaniment of tinkling star music, he launches out like one of his own rockets into uncharted dream spaces. This is a flagrant

exploitation of the popular romantic attitude towards science as a panacea for all the troubles of mankind and a proof of man's greatness; and it stifles critical evaluation.

What is most dangerous about *I Aim at the Stars* is the difficulty one has in distinguishing the true from the fictional. The film purports to be a true story; and we cannot therefore allow it the liberty of fictional truth but must instead test it with the acids of the historical truth. But how much of it can we check on? So little information is available to us that we are pitifully dependent upon this film for the facts. Von Braun was spirited away at the war's end to the United States in the utmost secrecy; it is only in relatively recent years, with the publicity surrounding the space experiments, that people realised what had happened.

The film, while on the surface honestly trying to present all the facts, is not guiltless of the same hypocritical attitude as the American government. Although it contains extracts from contemporary documentaries and newsreels, with the intention of giving a realistic historical atmosphere, what is noticeably lacking is any inclusion of extracts from the mass of existing material showing the devastation caused by von Braun's V-weapons. Such pictorial evidence is withheld: it would perhaps sway an audience too far against the film's protagonist.

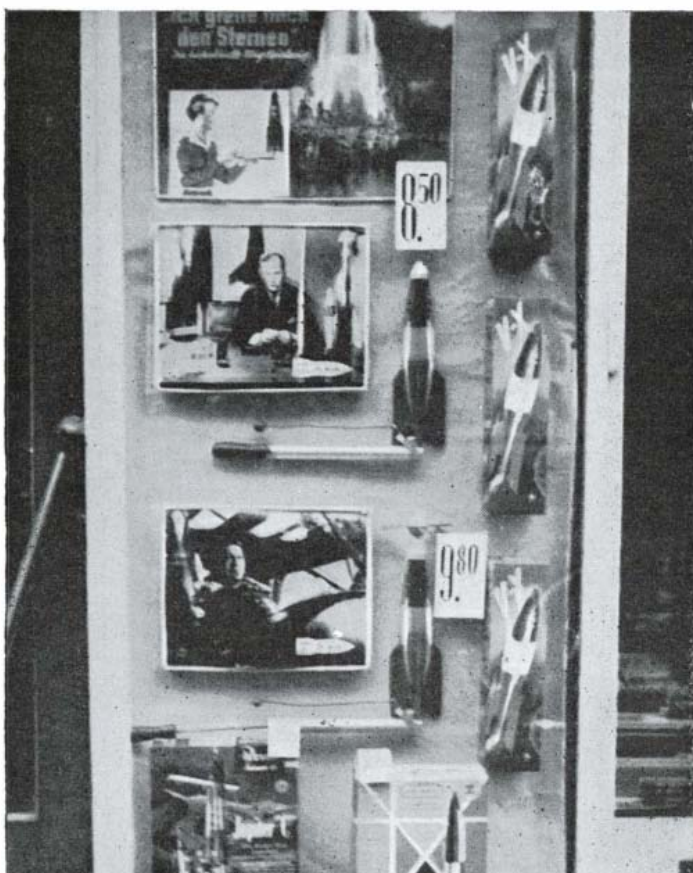
A very peaceful war is the one we see in this film, in which spies are tolerated and most Germans are really very nice, just like us and they don't even speak in funny English any more; and only one person is seen to be hurt—and that an S.S. officer who is a *real* Nazi, not like Wernher who is only a pretend Nazi, and he hates Wernher so it's a good thing he's got rid of . . . Was this the war that was fought?

This is but one of a whole series of questions about the authenticity of the details in this film, concerning a person who is still living. Such a work is factually invalidated by the provable falseness of any single detail—such as the wildly artificial spy sub-plot. But can we be sure that it will not be accepted by many people, especially the young, as a pretty accurate record of the war and of Wernher von Braun's life?

I think, all the same, that the film ought to be shown; though with one impractical proviso. I would like to see it double-billed with *Mein Kampf*. This is a Swedish-produced film compiled by Erwin Leisner and Torre Sjöberg from cuttings taken from thousands of feet of newsreels and documentaries and relating the history of the Nazi era. It is a film made without any attempt to exploit sensationalism, merely as a timely and effective reminder of how it was. The evidence is undeniable: the Warsaw Ghetto sequences, for instance, were shot by the Germans as an example of Jewish degradation. The terrible beauty of the starving faces of the Jewish children of the Ghetto offers a perfect image and miniature of the last war. The children's eyes reveal a truth there is no avoiding; and would prove an effective foil to the seductive plausibility and specious frankness of the Wernher von Braun film.

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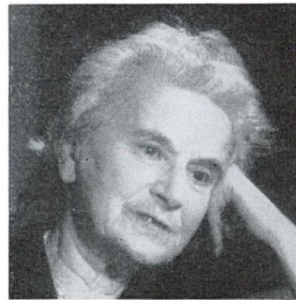
Perhaps I should add a postscript: what has this film got to do with real life? Am I not taking it all too seriously? In Stuttgart a few months ago I saw stills from this film displayed in a shop window. It was the window of a toy-shop. The toys that the stills were helping to sell were make-it-yourself kits for V-1 and V-2 rockets. For the drawing of the moral it is not necessary to establish which came first, the film or the toys. Whichever it was, an American-backed film glorifying a German scientist has given a tacit licence to the manufacturers of these toys. What is also being manufactured with the toys, and equally licensed, is a justification for those who served Hitler and for their policies.



Shop window in Stuttgart, with stills from "I Aim at the Stars" advertising rocket toys.

MONITOR *in Profile*

by DAVID ROBINSON



Interviewed by "Monitor":
Mary McCarthy, W. H. Auden,
Duke Ellington, Marie Rambert,
Darius Milhaud.

AFTER THREE YEARS, MONITOR is still giving television viewers their fortnightly shot of culture; and in our proudly philistine society, such longevity is in itself a remarkable tribute. In the course of sixty programmes, *Monitor* has attracted almost unqualified praise from every quarter. *The Daily Worker* called it "consistently intelligent and revealing," and the *Express* said that it "can boast some of the most effective dramatic documentary film-making on television today." *The Times*, in its old-world way, described it as inscribing "its fortnightly comment on the arts with a most incisive flourish"; *Vogue*, with tortured coyness, called it "the programme with the most noticing cameras on television"; while even SIGHT AND SOUND admitted that it "has improved enormously".

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The invention of the programme cannot apparently be credited to any single person. The idea of a culture corner had, they now say, been in the air for several months before it settled down, in February 1958, as *Monitor*. The chief architect, from the start, has been Huw Wheldon, a Welshman who is a good deal funnier, shrewder and generally more sympathetic than he sometimes appears on the television screen. He was born in 1916, and his career suggests his restless enthusiasm. He was at the London School of Economics and read for the Bar before serving as a paratrooper during the war. After the war, he became Director for Wales for the Arts Council, then the Arts Council Representative for the Festival of Britain.

"I was one of the few people genuinely excited by television," he explains; but it was difficult to get into the BBC ("at least to get the money I wanted"). He accepted a consolatory job as head of publicity but soon showed his flair as a performer, in a children's programme, and eventually found his niche in the Talks Department. His combination of experience as an administrator and as an artist has resulted in his unique position as backroom boss as well as front man on *Monitor*—a responsibility uncomfortably designated as 'Editor'. Wheldon is inclined to make snap assessments like "This item can stand ten minutes but it couldn't possibly stand eleven"—which may or may not be true, but which his team are prepared to accept, it seems, more out of genuine respect and trust than because of his habitually emphatic manner of expressing himself.

Until last autumn, when he went to Drama, Peter Newington was officially producer of the programme. According to one of their close associates, Newington must take credit for overcoming "the slightly apologetic air of the early programmes, and the tendency to skimp items. Peter saw more clearly than Huw at first the need to be quite uncompromising." Newington's career has been more clearly associated with the arts than Wheldon's. Trained in stage design, which he taught at the Old Vic School under Saint-Denis, he was later an actor and producer for Children's Television.

The staffing is perhaps generous for a fortnightly magazine programme. In place of Newington, as producer, there are now two associate producers, both of whom have been with *Monitor* since its early days. Nancy Thomas, a brisk, wiry little woman, looks much too young to have worked at the Foreign Office before the war, but she did. Later she was successively secretary to Sir Kenneth Clark and Sir William Haley, before working through BBC Television as a planner, a production assistant in Talks, and eventually producer on programmes like *Animal, Vegetable and Mineral*, *The Sky at Night*, *First Hand* and *Panorama*. Humphrey Burton, the other associate producer, is 29, read music at Cambridge, and came to television via radio, in which he began as a sound mixer.

Apart from these, there are a production assistant, David Jones (26, also Cambridge; Marlowe Society and a leaning towards the theatre) and a research assistant, Ann Turner (St. Andrew's and Doris Langley Moore's Museum of Costume before the BBC, where she was at one time assistant to John Read). Any one of them is likely to play a first-hand

creative role in the programme: David Jones, for instance, has made a number of the best films on writers (Durrell, Forster); Ann Turner, specialising in the plastic arts, directed an imaginative film study of Rodin. People seem to stay longer with *Monitor* than with some other television units.

Inevitably, when people more immediately familiar with techniques of music or painting turn their hand to film-making, the film editor assumes a major role. Allan Tyrer, a small, serene man of about forty, working on upwards of a hundred *Monitor* films over the past two or three years, has become something of a specialist in art documentaries. He and his two assistants complete *Monitor's* usual complement, though there are generally one or two outside film directors under exclusive contract (John Schlesinger was one; at present they have only Ken Russell).

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One of the advantages of the off-hand way of the British towards the arts is that it at least leaves discussion fairly unhampered by political pressures—even the minor politics of a big organisation like the BBC. "It is not a case of being free to do what we like," says Wheldon. "We've jolly well *got* to do what we like." The selection of subjects for some two hundred items (roughly half-and-half live and filmed) constituting the first sixty programmes shows how they have used their freedom. A very rough percentage breakdown under main subject headings looks like this. (The right-hand column indicates apparent trends to increase or decrease the proportion of time allotted to a subject):—

Painting and Sculpture	28	+
Theatre	21	—
Music	17	+
Literature	12	+
Ballet and Opera	7	—
Cinema	6	—
Architecture	2	—
Miscellaneous (including photography, art topography, popular art, etc.)	7	+

It is not perhaps surprising to find painting and sculpture heading the list. Treatment of the plastic arts has varied from Michael Ayrton's poetical analyses and John Berger's passionate dissections of individual paintings to the *Monitor* unit's own films, which sometimes tend to a rather artless technique of rambling and zooming cameras accompanied by the sort of music which admonishes the innocent to put off their caps and the smiles from their faces for This is Art. At their best—the recent Henry Moore film, for instance—they can really seem to reveal something new about an artist and his psychology.

Drama ranges from annotated excerpts from current theatre controversies, to a devastatingly revealing film of Fritz Kortner bludgeoning his way through rehearsals of *Danton's Death*; from a brawl between Alan Brien and the author of *One More River* to a usefully comprehensive brief introduction to Dürrenmatt. The coverage of ballet has not often come up to the standard of *Monitor's* tribute to Ballet Rambert, with a sensitive assembly of early and recent films of the company, and Rambert herself, movingly pleading the cause of her little theatre: "If we say that the Royal Ballet is our National Gallery of Dancing, I would like modestly to be the Tate Gallery." *Monitor's* best opera story to date has been *Bing at the Met*, one of Wheldon's most successful neck-stretching interviews.

The proportion of literary items is surprisingly high in comparison with those devoted to the more obviously visual arts, and some of *Monitor's* biggest successes have been with writers—Graves in Majorca, for example, and Durrell at Nîmes ("Everyone is an artist, but most people go through life in a state of vegetable slumber.") Here, though, *Monitor* finds itself at its most perilous; if the writer lacks an element of personal showmanship, or has too much of it, there is a danger that the artist will be lost at the expense of the domestic figure



Monitor rehearsal, with cameras trained on Huw Wheldon, Yehudi Menuhin and a group of Indian musicians.

the pictures will show. On the other hand, there are dangers of over-dramatisation: a film about Pound, which had an excellent commentary and some splendid moments of the poet himself, gave the unfortunate impression that the old man spends his days stalking and striding about his castle at Brunnenburg with the energetic mania of a mouse in a treadmill.

This is the greatest pitfall for a culture magazine. Eventually *Monitor's* selling point is the presence of the artist himself; and there is the constant danger that the personality will distract from the work itself. Admittedly this has happened, but not too often. The *Monitor* team are at once conscious of the danger, and, as a whole, have rather more than a tabloid interest in the work of the artists they are discussing.

The cinema, one of the most visual of the arts, occupies a low position on the list, and has been, perhaps, *Monitor's* outstanding failure of imagination. Perhaps they have been discouraged by work done elsewhere, even though *Monitor* has opportunities for a new and individual approach. In three years there have been only a dozen or so items, of which only the interview with Orson Welles (which occupied, exceptionally, an entire programme) and Jay Leyda's presentation of Eisenstein's Mexican material are memorable.

Much of *Monitor's* best work has appeared among its own miscellaneous short films. The nature of the programme has permitted the production of a kind of discursive essay which is not generally possible elsewhere in the commercial cinema world. Broadly speaking, the favourite subjects have been popular art—Circus, Mechanical Music, Brass Bands, Buskers, John Betjeman talking about the crazy statuary in the old Crystal Palace grounds.

John Schlesinger has shown a bent for affectionate satire—on hi-fi enthusiasts (*Hi-Fi-Fo-Fum*) and film festivals for example—coupled with unexpected lyrical qualities (*The*

Innocent Eye, a study of children as painters). Ken Russell, too, at his best (*Guitar Craze*) has a lyrical gift and a gentle humour, which he all too often sacrifices to a naive quest for the coy and arty.

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"One of our boasts is that we attract a small majority rather than a large minority," says Wheldon, with a touch of Welsh epigram. Viewer research tells very little about the audience for *Monitor* except that it is larger than one might have hoped, is growing, and is composed of people who find the programme interesting, rather than exclusively of people with a prior interest in the subjects discussed.

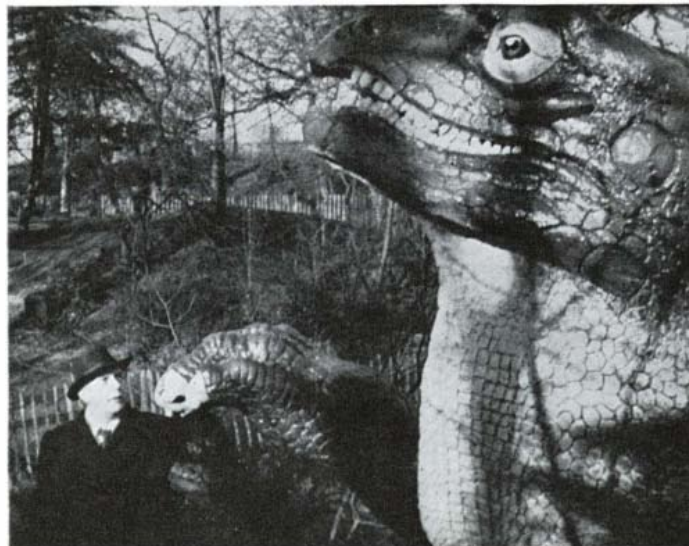
This numerical success is unquestionably due to the successful conception of the programme. It is deliberately not aimed at any preconceived audience; rather it is designed in abstract, but with one eye to the inherent interest of the stories and the other on certain preconceptions about the British public at large. "In this country, people—and I include myself, ourselves—are much more literate about the rent act and shoes and fashions than they are about culture and the arts," (Wheldon again). "So we make no assumption of previous knowledge—or rather, we assume an ignorance, our own ignorance included." This is why the not-quite-ignorant viewer is occasionally startled to have Wheldon patiently spell out for him household names (M-I-L-H-A-U-D, Milhaud!). There is some effort, all the same, not to make this assumption of ignorance generally insulting. The commentary to a recent film compilation about Tolstoy, for instance, contained the phrase "... about the time of his famous renunciation of the world." "We thought a lot about that," says Wheldon, "and about placing 'famous' so that we could tell those who didn't know about Tolstoy without suggesting that those who *did* know, didn't."

The assumptions once made, the level of discussion is not further compromised. Pound or Rambert, Moore or Bernstein or Zeffirelli can ride their hobby-horses practically where they please, with Wheldon offering or requesting only an occasional gloss. This, though, is where he sometimes gives most offence to the better-informed viewer, if not to the interviewee. But he is unrepentant: if he asks questions which appear fatuous, they are asked on behalf of the viewer, who perhaps would himself like to ask just those fatuous questions, but would be too shy to do so, even if he had the chance.

Eventually, of course, the attitude of the programme will be assessed from Wheldon's own screen attitude and persona. About this he is evasive. Does he conceive his role as that of pedagogue, expert, critic, or common man? None of them, he replies. He is nothing, just the cement to hold the thing together, the background to show off the subjects.

This view is, of course, unrealistically modest. Wheldon makes an impression. "... sidling apologetically on to the screen, attempting to project an image of the common man and looking instead like the personification of the BBC"; Derek Hill's recent description in *SIGHT AND SOUND* was not kind, perhaps; and viewer research shows that his distaste is the reaction of a minority, but it is a reaction all the same.

This matter of attitude becomes all the more important since Wheldon includes among the self-imposed limitations



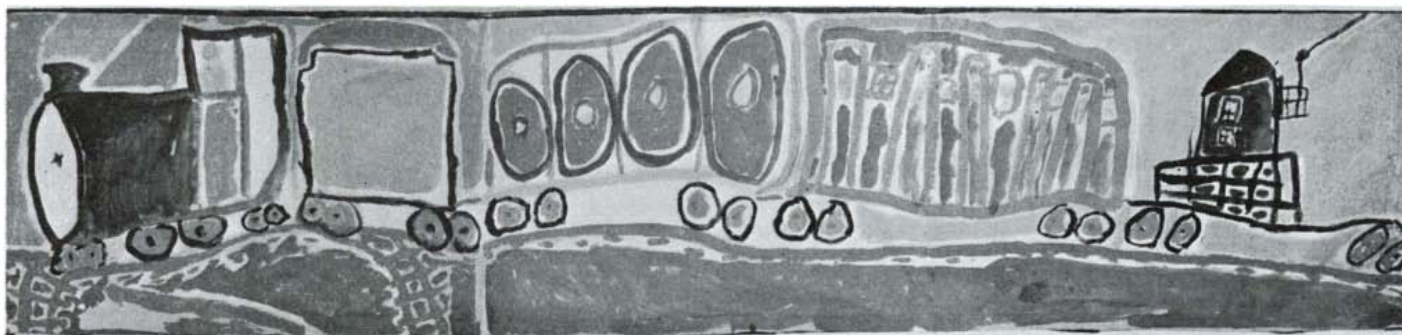
John Betjeman amid "the crazy statuary of the old Crystal Palace".

within which the team works the decision not to use critics or to be 'critical'—which is, of course, impossible. A critical attitude is implicit in the choice of subjects, the presentation, the existence of the programme even. Nor does *Monitor* feel itself bound to the emasculating mania for both sides of every question which often inhibits the current affairs programmes. One must remember, though, that the group initiating the critical attitude are—by calling—non-experts, professional dilettantes. The problem has never yet seemed serious, though it has probably let us in for a preponderance of 'safe' subjects, and momentary lapses like Wheldon's selling out of a statement by Richard Hoggart on some such subject as violence in popular art. A more clearly defined editorial point of view would do *Monitor* no harm.

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What end, finally, does *Monitor* achieve? Does the acknowledgement of the national philistinism lead simply to flattery and condoning; or is *Monitor* in the long run contributing to a new atmosphere, teaching the British to take culture? "We hope so, of course," says Wheldon; "but the moment we let such a consideration enter our calculations we'd be finished. Finished." Such is our fear of instruction.

The level of discussion is about the same as that of the literary weeklies or the Sunday magazine sections. But *Monitor* manages to reach a larger public, simply by its method of not making assumptions of a basic knowledge (and it must be emphasised that this in itself carries no shame; the method has honourable precedents). *Monitor*, inevitably, annoys most of us at least once a fortnight—even if only by the aggressive contemporary stable that serves it as a studio set: the ability to irritate is part of its achievement. But that it takes aspects of art, from motives of pleasure and interest, and succeeds, apparently, in pleasing and interesting, seems like a fairly proselytising step in the cause of culture.



Child's drawing from the film "The Innocent Eye".



*Eyes are vocall, Teares have Tongues,
And there be words not made with lungs;
Sententious showers, o let them fall,
Their cadence is Rhetorical—*

RICHARD CRASHAW.

CRITICS OF INGMAR BERGMAN can hardly decide whether he is guilty of virtue or virtuosity. Presumably his virtue stems from his fundamentalist background and existentialist proclivities. His virtuosity, of more obscure origin, may be related to a classical-biblical education and perfervid strivings as actor, dramatist, scenario-writer and director in an era and climate which are friendly towards extremes.

Bergman began as a dramatist, and words are as vital as close-ups to his art. *The Seventh Seal* was based upon his play *A Medieval Fresco*. Interestingly, the dramatic title is visual, while the cinematic title echoes a sonorous passage in Revelation. Rhetoric is his keynote. His ability to transmute words and pictures and his ease with the shock techniques of rhetoric remind one of metaphysical poets like John Donne, as well as *bona fide* mystics like Teresa and John of the Cross, who favoured the oxymoron. Their favourite oxymora—"living death and dying life"—are also Bergman's. And his reliance on a stint of visual symbols places him in a tradition of repentance literature best exemplified in English by the poetry of Richard Crashaw. In this tradition, oxymora contend with the clichés of medieval and baroque religious art to produce a dreamlike atmosphere.

Bergman's emblems are not hard to discover. The blessed threesome—"burning babe" (or snowy lamb), serene

The Rhetoric of *Wild Strawberries*

by ELEANOR McCANN



madonna, sullied Magdalene—haunt his pilgrims' progress. In the distance sounds the dust-and-worms oratory of the cross, the coffin, and the corpse. (In a sense, the surrealist clock is an intruder.) Suspense is inevitable, for these symbols—including his characters—are almost constantly quarrelling. Most of them are literally restricted to his medium of black-and-white photography. But the virtuoso may also be attracted to red. For example, the "flaming Magdalene" of baroque tradition sheds tears to douse (or feed) the fire of her past sin (or present devotion) as symbolised by her hair. (Appropriately, the eternally weeping slut of *Wild Strawberries* is consumed by fire.) Also, in *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*, the sweet babe is associated with the flaming fruit of summer in a way that signalises Bergman's ability to revitalise tradition.

Bergman's use of oxymora is as subtly inventive, however traditional. They include life and death, love and hate, youth and age, summer and winter, passion and reason, heat and cold, and even the Romantic *cri-de-cœur* nature and hypocrisy. While any of these conflicts may be the heartbeat of drama, they find a pulse of urgency in contemporary Sweden. Inevitably, a Swede relates to his climate, with its northernmost winters a martyrdom offset by midsummer's warmth. And the contrast has given him the moral shivers, which are aggravated by sociological change. The scene in *One Summer of Happiness* showing nude lovers racing into a sun-flecked lake was much exploited by American distributors, who should have illustrated the film with a picture showing an old back-

"*Wild Strawberries*". Above: Borg (Victor Sjöström) turns medical examiner in a dream sequence. Diagnosis: "a congestion of coldness". Below: "Wintry pleasantries" during the professor's visit to his mother (Naima Wifstrand).

country minister consigning the girl's body and soul to hell. But urbanisation and urbanity, after halting such damnation of the innocents, have induced a subtler sting. Isolation is that living hell. The young are often restless and ill-tempered; the old, more favoured by legislation than by counsel with the young. Coldness and complexity mark Stockholm, where the old and new sections are as distinct as they are splendid. Coldness and isolation, in turn, suggest dispassionate reason—a chimera confronting Adam, Bergman, and his Everyman characters.

Bergman's oxymora form a complex of life-love-youth-summer-passion-heat-and-nature opposed to death-hate-age-winter-reason-cold-and-hypocrisy. Coldness and warmth and age and youth are the points of the compass for Bergman's travellers in *Wild Strawberries*, and the life-giving fruit of summer their quest. Half-savoured in youth, the elixir may not sweeten the chill of advancing years. But it will haunt the recollections of old age.

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The opening scene of the film is heavily ironic. An old doctor, Isak Borg, is mildly intoxicated with wine and wisdom as he reads to himself from his journal, revealing his "charitable" reasons for having evolved into a source of irritation to his housekeeper. He *had* a wife (*vide* a frozen portrait) and *has* a son and daughter-in-law (*vide* two other faces). His own face hardly changes as he diverges into a nightmare occasioned by the chewing of his conscience and the granting of an "honorary" degree. The dream is dominated by the oxymoron living death—in this case the living death of atrophied emotions. Borg finds himself walking down a desolate street in the old section of Stockholm. Where, presumably, he once had friends, windows are boarded up. He is dismayed by a fingerless clock, then distracted by an ancient hearse charging down the street. (Time vanishes and Death gallops.) The unconscious struggles. As spooky as the unruly steed in Plato's parable, a horse neighs and shies. A wheel (another time symbol) is wrenched off by an old-style lamp (life-and-learning)-post, and a partially opened coffin is spilled out. The outstretched hand pulls Borg unbearably close to a blank, puffed-out face (the clock again and a cunning reversal of the death's head). The old man wakens to grope towards a "certainty" that his dream meant—dying life.

But he is "wise". In the bustle of departure by auto rather than 'plane, his daughter-in-law appears to accompany him. A flaming match provokes angry words hidden behind cold faces. With apparent surprise, Borg learns that he has alienated her by refusal to give counsel and his son by refusal to cancel a debt. Abruptly, a side-trip to his family's old summer home leaves the old doctor alone in the wild strawberry bed to moulder through a series of daydreams as distressing as any nightmare.

Significantly, he is a spectator. The first scene takes place on that very spot where his cousin-fiancée (the white-bosomed madonna of his youth) is being beguiled by his brother. The midday meal scene is one of quarrelsome exchange: counsel for the young and wild strawberries and a birthday song for a deaf old uncle. Again the accent is cleverly displaced. The "unknowing" children are made to seem somewhat ridiculous for their gift, whereas Borg's withholding of comfort from his children is the true absurdity. Next a "relative's" baby (the wished-for child of young love) is left exposed to the elements. The old man hovers over the cradle with ineffectual solicitude until the madonna comes to rescue the baby, chiding herself for carelessness. And indeed it was careless to turn a young man's love into hate and hypocrisy. The daydream ends feverishly with a tryst of the successful lovers and an excessively artificial *diner à deux* (the natural result of brutally suppressed anger in himself, the spectator). For the standards of his day would have required him to love his brother as himself and toast the eternal happiness of the bride.

Reverie is blotted out by a young virgin, as she later announces herself to be, whose father, she is quick to inform

him, now owns the property. She demands a ride for herself and two boys, off on a junket of which her father is somewhat disapproving. Her companions—a science and a divinity student—form a living oxymoron. Amused by their rivalry over her, the girl declares the divinity student to be her chaperon. If the first madonna of the wild strawberry patch was careless, her descendant (played by the same actress) is certainly carefree.

A sudden accident at the next turn of the road introduces a man and wife who are middle-aged and deeply embittered. His religion (hypocritical) and her neurosis (histrionic) vie with the withering of bodily strength and beauty to set off their quarrel. At its climax, she knocks off his glasses—a pathetic and ridiculous reminder of myopia and middle-age. Saying, in effect, "Not before the children," the daughter-in-law swiftly evicts the pair. This flashing scene is important; its futile vulgarity demonstrates the all-out horror of atrophied love. It casts its shadow on the embryonic conflicts of the "children"; cessation of their banter seems to indicate a moment of self-awareness. It foreshadows further torment for Isak Borg, whose first love was fruitless and whose second attempt at love was hypocritical. It is also a palliative, for none of the other characters is as depraved as this pair.

The festive alfresco luncheon which shortly follows comes as something of a respite: the old man displays his urbanity, the "children's" quarrel bubbles beneath the surface, and then the daughter-in-law asks to accompany him on a quick visit to his mother. During the visit there is much surface gentility, yet the matriarch's wintry pleasantries do not offset sly references to the money she will leave. And there is bitter irony in her question, "Why do I always feel so cold?" and in her son's answer, "Because you have poor circulation." The daughter-in-law's eyes appear to be haunted by a pattern that emerges: like mother, like son, like grandson, like . . . embryo.

Forced to confide in someone, the daughter-in-law describes still another quarrel—cold as the rain that fell on her and her husband as they fought over the possibility of an abortion. His desire to withhold even the spark of life is based, presumably, on bitterness towards his father and shame for his mother. His question, "How does he know that I am his son?" really asks whether man can withhold love and bear any kind of fruit. And that is the real horror that was revealed in the spilled-out coffin.

Still another quarrel scene follows, as love and religion have broken out and met with noisy challenge among the young people. This blaze, too, is quenched by the daughter-in-law, but more tolerantly than before, allowing the old man to doze off into his third nightmare. This time he breaches a boarded-up exterior into stark corridors leading into a medical (self-) examination room. His sharp-eyed (but really myopic) guide and inquisitor is the arch-hypocrite of the worst quarrel scene—therefore the character least qualified to be his tormentor. The audience, a cross-section of the other characters, is expressionless. Borg's bumbling is due less to the stress of age than to a latent awareness of his marginal quality as a human being. The obvious contrast—examination of body and of soul—comes into focus when he is asked to examine the inquisitor's wife. The jury (his censor) summons disapproval when he reports pleadingly that she is dead. So she is. Death caused by a congestion of coldness, urbanity and hate—the disease to which the good doctor is succumbing.

Proof—or seeming proof—follows in a swift change of scene. In a surrealist woodland his late wife succumbs to a crude admirer—then laments her husband's hypocritical kindness. The hint of a house burning down to cause her death arouses many echoes. One is reminded of Ibsen's *Master Builder*, who believes that his house burned down, causing the death of his only child, because he so desired; and of the mummified wish-projector in Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata*. And Robert Frost's *Fire and Ice* is not inappropriate:

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.*

*From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favour fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.*

If Frost is right, Borg's thought-projection of his wife's death reveals the utmost in hypocrisy.

But not worthy of execution, for his sentence is to be "life" at hard labour. Nearness of the "children" and the young couple sustain him during the ceremony which might otherwise have been the crowning mockery. Overtures to his son are rebuffed, not forgotten. The "children" bob up to serenade him. Sudden harmony between science and religion and the charm of an old-fashioned gesture arouse conjecture that the *gamine* may be one of the wise virgins. In a tragi-comic sequel, Borg offers first a sleeping pill, then his first name, then his last name to his shocked and reproving housekeeper, who finally tucks him into bed. (Is this not the cradle of old age?) A last guarded conversation with his son suggests that the seed of his physical immortality may be cherished as the fruit of love.

Was the film essentially a melodrama? Is so much schematisation more glib than meaningful? Not necessarily, although the rhetorical fireworks may be a distraction from, as well as a revelation of, the conflict inherent in existence. And Bergman may be ambiguous or fallible in his choice of symbols. For example, the nail tearing the flesh of Borg's hand seems a mistake, unless Bergman construes Christ as a victim of His own urbanity. (Or is this another displaced accent? Or an Existentialist bellow asserting the sanctity of self?) A sub-conflict between symbols at war with each other and symbols marching under false colours must strain the stoutest heart and brain, and Bergman's viewers may identify with his suffering characters for the wrong reasons. (In particular, the episode of the Magdalene wife is as much a pitfall as an explanation of what might have happened.) Yet Bergman's enthusiasts find the challenge worth the effort. They may be satisfied to take rhetoric as such or leave it, but are caught by the lure of constant conflict and a hint of what seems warm and sweet and eternal. Virgil's advice, it seems, is still highly palatable:

"Steep thyself in a bowl of summertime."

THE LONDON FESTIVAL

continued from page 19)

moral and social stasis under a veneer of formal experiment (Truffaut's mixture of farce, tragedy, thriller and psychological study; Visconti's mixture of Marxism, grand opera, classical tragedy and Biblical analogy). The latter category is the stronger, and infinitely dangerous, since its peculiar brand of aesthetic, social and moral confusion strikes a willing chord in many audiences who are themselves tired of the old truisms, themselves disorientated and dissatisfied.

This is not the old controversy of social conscience versus entertainment. It is the new, 1960 pattern—reflected in current debate between the two most extreme critical schools of thought—of too much of the old, unchanging, social conscience pamphleteering versus art for art's sake sleight-of-hand. The new gods are mercurial, vulnerable, fond of the dark; the old by comparison ponderous, too often unbending. Whatever else the London Film Festival may have accomplished, its crowning achievement will be the fact that it honoured a film, *L'Avventura*, and a director equipped to challenge this dual authoritarianism on its own grounds—with a pure and individual command of expression and a restless, contemporary spirit of human inquiry.

Book Reviews

AGEE ON FILM: Volume Two, by James Agee. Foreword by John Huston. (McDowell Obolensky, New York. \$7.50.)

AGEE ON FILM is a nicely comprehensive title, embracing at once Agee the writer about film and Agee the writer for film. The division between these two personae is neat, and indeed as presented here rather misleadingly so. First, in Volume One, published in 1958, we have Agee the critic, entertaining and enlightening the readers of *Time* (every week) and *The Nation* (every month) from 1941 to 1948. Then suddenly the break: resigning his two critical posts, Agee devotes the remaining seven years of his life almost entirely to creation, producing in a frenzy of writing his solitary long novel, *A Death in the Family*, his short novel *The Morning Watch*, the famous series of television programmes on Lincoln for "Omnibus", and, of course, the five film scripts published in *Agee on Film*, Volume Two.

It is easy to read too much into this sudden transformation, especially when one remembers that his earliest writing still accessible to us is a volume of poems, *Permit Me Voyage*, and two experimental film scripts (neither included in the new volume) *The House* and *Man's Fate*; to see Agee's career from the mid-thirties until 1948 as an enforced diversion of essentially creative energies into frustrating sidetracks of criticism and all-purpose journalism, from which sooner or later he had to escape. But all the evidence suggests that Agee voluntarily chose journalism, perhaps as an escape from himself (it is the fact of the choice, not the reason for it, which is important), and thoroughly enjoyed it. He took pride in handling the most intractable subjects for *Fortune*, and his reviewing has none of the cranky, apparently perverse quality which generally marks the critical writing of creators *manqués*. Its pleasure and enthusiasm are marred hardly at all by envy of those who are doing instead of merely watching, even though he once admitted that he was making a suggestion "jealously, because I would so love to make the films rather than see them made . . ."

The early scripts throw some light on the matter, particularly *The House* (reprinted in *Cinemages* 9). This is a wildly over-elaborate sketch for a film, full of instructions on the photographic textures required, the precise disposition of such visual elements as the three smokestacks in the opening sequence, the timing of shots, and even the instrumentation of the music. At a glance one would say that this is not just a script, but a complete film in the director's mind, caught as far as possible, and quite irrelevantly as far as the substance goes, in the accidents of print. But on second thoughts, even allowing for the inexperience and over-enthusiasm of a young man in love with the cinema (Agee was about 25 when he wrote it), it does not look like a film-maker's film at all. It is an impossibly ideal film, a film which could never be even half realised on the screen, and even if attempted could not nearly live up to its intricate blueprint. In fact, it looks suspiciously like the work of someone more interested in thinking about the cinema than in actually making films.

If anything, the later scripts go to support the idea that though the film may have been a passionate interest for Agee, his deeper nature was not really involved in film creation. All the scripts in *Agee on Film* were written to specific commissions from producers. Three of them, *The African Queen*, *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky* and *The Night of the Hunter*, were in fact filmed, *The Blue Hotel* ended up after his death as a television film, and only *Noa Noa* remains unproduced. The first four are good straightforward jobs of adaptation, tidy, literate and eminently craftsmanlike; they touch on one or two characteristic themes (particularly courage), but it is difficult to see any sign of real personal involvement in them—even such as one finds in his commentary and dialogue for *The Quiet One* (inexplicably omitted from this collection), where at least he is dealing with a subject which can inspire him to the same

sort of humane reportage he achieved some nine years earlier on the plight of the sharecroppers in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Admittedly a script is not a film, and things might have been very different had Agee directed his own scripts—Jay Leyda, after all, has called him “a great film director who did not get the chance to direct.” Admittedly, too, the form in which some of this book is presented may be misleading. *The African Queen* and *The Night of the Hunter* are apparently printed from post-production scripts, but Agee died before *The Night of the Hunter* was finished (after, it is said, a fairly extensive rewriting by someone else) and was not in on the later stages of *The African Queen*, which was in any case written in collaboration with Huston (who is rumoured to have rejected whole sections of Agee’s treatment from the start) and possibly John Collier, Peter Viertel and a number of other writers whose names were fleetingly linked with the film. But even if the scripts here presented do not fairly represent what Agee originally wrote, one cannot think that the verdict on the originals would be much different.

Noa Noa takes us to the other extreme. In detail—the camera making the sign of the cross over Gauguin’s body; the funeral sequence composed bar by bar to Chopin’s Funeral March—the script is so elaborately and impracticably explicit one can hardly imagine any director (and certainly not David Bradley, erstwhile Orson Welles of 16 mm, for whom it was intended) taking happily to it. On the other hand, the piece as a whole remains obstinately a novel cast vaguely in the form of an ideal film; its long disquisitions on art and life are fascinating in themselves, but would have to be “adapted” as ruthlessly as anything in *The House* to bring them within the scope of practical film-making.

Paradoxically, from this book one might guess Agee to be an interesting novelist, an excellent journalist and an acute critic, since the talents of all three are clearly being applied to the craft of film writing. But as a creative film-maker he remains a completely unknown quantity. Perhaps in his early death we lost a potentially great director, perhaps not. His scripts offer no real evidence one way or the other; and now that we have “Agee on Film” virtually complete, we must just resign ourselves to leaving the question unanswered.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

THE DAYS WERE TOO SHORT, by Marcel Pagnol. (Hamish Hamilton, 25s.)

AN IDYLICALLY HAPPY childhood is more than a sound beginning for life, a likely producer of well-balanced adults. It is a mine for imaginative digging later. Nothing like the things of childhood ever impresses the senses or—at its deepest level—the memory in later life; for nothing is ever again so absolute, so literally incomparable. And when, to the vividness, the over-lifesize nature of childhood, you add what looks like perfection of affections and circumstances, happiness that can be not so much nostalgically recalled as actively relived, then you really have an enviable start in life. To Marcel Pagnol Provence is his mine for digging in, and *The Days Were Too Short* tells why. It takes his childhood up to the age of nine or ten, and a decade of glory it seems to have been; showing clearly why to Pagnol Provence is not just a place to be seen and heard, but a living presence that is felt, touched, smelled, known inside out and above all loved.

The family background is so satisfactorily filled in that one has the surprising feeling of its being exactly “right”; so that to be born into the French provincial *petit-bourgeoisie* (subsection: anticlerical, pedagogical, abstemious, teetotal) seems enviable and even romantic. His family, from Pagnol’s point of view at least, sounds pretty nearly perfect: mother adored, father idolised, brother and sister much cherished; term-times on the outskirts of Marseilles, holidays inland in hilly, wooded country, all cicadas and poachers and the laws and honours of the chase (shooting, trapping, whichever it happened to be); a tremendous, tough happiness. It all warms and inspires, it is completely without whimsy, it has its moments of dread, terror and even hatred, and Pagnol’s account, though rather too long, is always entertaining, as well as touching for its contents and immensely interesting for what it foreshadows. Rita Barisse has translated with great dash and boldness, never seeming stumped by apparently untranslatable jokes and even turning French spelling howlers into suitable English ones.

ISABEL QUIGLY



James Agee (centre) in a saloon scene from “*The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*”, adapted from Stephen Crane’s Western short story.

LA DOLCE VITA, by Federico Fellini and Lo Duca. Illustrated. (Editions Jean-Jacques Pauvert. Distributed in Britain by Rodney Book Service, 50s.)

ONE OF A SERIES of extravagantly illustrated books dealing with some of the more sensational and bizarre aspects of the cinema, this volume virtually tells the story of *La Dolce Vita* by way of photographs chosen from each of the main sequences. The stills are vivid and violent enough to pre-sell the picture successfully, though the total effect perhaps appears slightly more hysterical than Fellini intended. Reproduction is extremely good, with the exception of a few frame stills which appear to have been printed without an anamorphic adjustment (the film is in Totalscope). M. Lo Duca’s somewhat wordy introductory note prefaces the pictures with some useful comparisons and references to Fellini’s other films. It also gives the impression that *La Dolce Vita* has rather more to offer in the way of moral and social profundity than is actually the case.

JOHN GILLET

BOOKS RECEIVED

- L’ART DU CINEMA. By Pierre Lherminier. (Seghers, Paris. 19.80 NF.)
 ESSAI SUR LE JEUNE CINEMA FRANCAIS AND COMMENT PEUT-ON ETRE MARTIEN? By André S. Labarthe. (Rodney Books, 30s.)
 IL FILM CECOSLOVACCO. By Ernesto G. Laura. (Edizioni dell’Ateneo, Rome. 3,500 Lire.)
 LA GRANDE ADVENTURE DU CINEMA SUEDOIS. By Jean Béranger. (Eric Losfeld, Le Terrain Vague, Paris.)
 INSIDE PICTURES. By Ernest Betts. (The Cresset Press, 21s.)
 MAGIC SHADOWS. By Martin Quigley, Jr. (Quigley Publications, £1 12s.)
 THE PASSION. By Roger Manvell. (Heinemann, 18s.)
 PERMANENT RED. By John Berger. (Methuen, 16s.)
 PHOTOGRAPHY AS A FINE ART. By Robert Doty. (The George Eastman House, New York. \$7.50.)
 THE POTEMKIN MUTINY. By Richard Hough. (Hamish Hamilton, 18s.)
 PUPPEN UND ZEICHENFILM. By Reinold E. Thiel. (Rembrandt-Verlag, Berlin.)
 THE WALTER TAPE RECORDING BOOK. By Joseph Lloyd. (Focal Press, 12s. 6d.)

Correspondence

The Critical Question

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Miss Houston does not consider it important that two critics sharing apparently the same attitudes can react in opposite ways to a given film. This being so, it is difficult to take seriously the approval which she extends to the principle (if not the general practice) of commitment. As our magazine *Definition* has taken its stand on the ideal of committed criticism, I should like to specify the connection—as we see it—between politics and the act of critical judgment.

The “doctrine” of commitment—the idea that critics should be “committed” and the sense of the word commitment which this entails—can be reduced to two basic propositions:—

(1) Our choice of political allegiance involves two steps, taken simultaneously, but nevertheless logically separable: a moral choice which is our choice of values, and a rational decision as to which party or group best represents or embodies them.

(2) Any aesthetic judgment carries within it a moral judgment; and to say that a work of art is good or bad not merely implies a system of values upon which that judgment is based, but actively constitutes a choice of values—i.e. a commitment.

Any discussion of matter which is not concerned with the validity of one or other of these propositions is a waste of time.

If, however, we accept these two propositions, then the idea that the values implied in a man's critical work should coincide with those implied in his political allegiance will not come as a shock. In reality most of us are so confused in our attitude to life that considerable discrepancies do occur. Hence the need to stress the critic's responsibility. In theory, as Miss Houston points out, *all* criticism is committed. The “uncommitted” critics are those who are not troubled by the “discrepancies,” or who try through sophistication and self-disparagement to dodge the question of values altogether.

This view of the critical process presents its own difficulties, which we in *Definition* are trying to resolve. For one thing, it requires that the aesthetic underlying our analysis of a film (and any analysis, *pace* Miss Houston, presupposes an aesthetic) should bear some relation to the way the medium actually works. Another problem is that values seem to be formed on a far less accessible level than one might wish to believe. This was the point about the two critics with conflicting responses. But if our critical judgments do not reflect our values, then it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they are wholly arbitrary. Miss Houston's view reduces criticism to something so trivial as not to be worth bothering with.

Yours faithfully,

DAI VAUGHAN,
Co-Editor, *Definition*.

62 Kenworthy Road,
London, E.9.

SIR,—That old *point d'interrogation* which Miss Houston wrote of, thoughtfully, in “The Critical Question” was not, let's remember, invented by Mr. Anderson. Like the poor it has been with us always, and as many ages ago as 1952 Mr. Lambert wrote a fine probing article on the issue of commitment, called “Who Wants True?” I think it was fairly clear who did; both *Sequence* and *SIGHT AND SOUND* stood for humanism and the mystery of the commonplace and many readers were glad of the new directions in criticism they showed. But the issue was soft-pedalled then. Remember that we did not have the same pressures we have today, either within the cinema or without. We only really knew about four National Cinemas—British and American, Italian and French. An exotic oddity by the name of *Aan* did not foretell the arrival of Satyajit Ray, nor could we be sure that *Rashomon* wasn't simply a miracle in isolation. Similarly, political feeling was hardly the desperate thing it is today. Conservatives were happy to have won the '51 election but to socialists it did not seem an enormous task to turn the tables. Commitment 1960 is rather different. It has snowballed and bashed into anti-commitment, in the chilly weather of these never-so-good days.

Miss Houston is so good, so balanced and fair most of the way that I only mean to question her final point, *re* an aesthetic of cinema. (I won't quarrel about *Psycho*: the subject has become such a bore.) The prospect of defining the aesthetic of something as technically complex and emotionally overpowering as film is certainly formidable. For all I *know*, it may prove impossible. But I don't think we should exclude a study that, if successful, might well lessen the sort of disagreement between intelligent people that worries *Definition* but which Miss Houston cheerfully accepts. Her comparison, incidentally, with two witnesses' varying accounts of a traffic accident does not strike me as convincing. We are not prepared for an accident so the sight of one catches us off guard. I hope we are prepared to look when we go to the cinema. *To look*: that's the crux—if you like, at the workings of an aesthetic. Commitment is valuable but it has more to do with feeling.

Yours faithfully,

38, Red House Lane,
Bexleyheath, Kent.

CLIVE R. DENTON.

New York Letter

SIR,—As one who has lately left New York to live a while in London, may I say that Cecile Starr's New York Letter in your Summer issue was both accurate and perceptive? Practically everybody I know in New York who cares about cinema would agree with her strictures on Bosley Crowther's ham-handed reviews in the *New York Times* and also with her complaints about the Museum of Modern Art's anaemic and perfunctory programmes. (A painful contrast to your own National Film Theatre.) And she is, alas, quite right about the *Times*' influence on box-office—a bad review in the *Times*, I have been told, can be offset only by good reviews in *all* the other papers. I was also glad to see credit given to our new art cinemas, the Bleecker and the New Yorker, which now fill some of the vacuum left by the Museum of Modern Art. The praise of *Jazz on a Summer's Day* was just, but I wondered why nothing was said about the Frank-Leslie-Kerouac *Pull My Daisy*, another exciting experimental film that has been oddly neglected over here. It would have been the perfect short to run with *Shadows*, but the Academy chose instead a half-hour of well-mannered vapidity about Bruges and ballet.

A splendid letter—but why does its writer take Eisenstein's *Ivan, Part II* as a touchstone for testing the critics? Is it so universally agreed as she assumes that it is a masterpiece? She finds my own comments, in *Esquire*, “did him little credit in that direction”—i.e., as the professed defender of the faith—by their montage ye shall know them—against the philistine heresies of Kingsley Amis, my predecessor. I imagine Miss Starr is rather young. For no one who had experienced the great pre-1930 age of Soviet cinema when its films first burst on the movie world, as I did, could possibly forget the shock of disappointment when the creator of *Potemkin* and *Ten Days*, after ten years of frustration by the Stalinist cultural bureaucracy, finally produced *Nevisky* and then *Ivan*. Brilliant in some ways as these later films were, they were static pageants compared to the earlier ones; montage, which Eisenstein had made the central pillar of his aesthetic, was *streng verboten* by the commissars as “formalistic,” and so he had been forced to expend his prodigious talent on décor, costumes, and “atmosphere”; the photography and shots were still beautiful but they were no longer built up into significant form; *Nevisky* and *Ivan* were decadent art in the textbook meaning of the word. Of course Miss Starr may be right in what seems to me her exaggerated estimation of *Ivan*. My point here is that if one takes the great silent films as a norm, it is not inconsistent to find *Ivan* a come-down. When I described *Ivan*, by the way, as “damnable formalistic,” I was parodying the Soviet cultural line and not, as Miss Starr seems to think, speaking in my own voice. The context should have made it clear that “formalism” is what I like most in a film.

Yours faithfully,

23 Acacia Road,
London, N.W.8.

DWIGHT MACDONALD.

MacMahonism

SIR,—Concerning the MacMahonist aesthetics, we would like to correct certain erroneous information published by your collaborator, Richard Roud, in your autumn issue.

We quote:

“Happily, there are signs that a reaction in favour of common sense and intellectual values is on its way. Even Hoveyda in a recent issue of *Cahiers* attacks the MacMahonist aesthetics . . . in the person of its leader, Michel Mourlet.”

(continued on page 50)

Seen Any Good Films Lately?

"Mr. Zinsser takes the pants off their business"—says Dick Richards (Picture Show) when he writes of *the Producers* in William K. Zinsser's new and witty book.

"O to be in Hollywood! One thinks with nostalgia as one reads Mr. Zinsser's witty and, believe me, essentially accurate account of the great dream-factory. Here it all is: Hitchcock 'trying to make an actress out of a star'; Burt Lancaster playing golf in his office, across the hall from the Rouaults and the Van Goghs; and, standing about somewhere, the Southern mansion for 'Gone with the Wind' and the train which ran over Garbo in 'Anna Karenina' . . . it is hilarious."

DILYS POWELL (*Sunday Times*)

"The Western (among other traditional movie forms) is taken to town in hilarious style by one of my New York colleagues, William K. Zinsser, who has just had a book published in London, 'Seen Any Good Films Lately?' . . . Zinsser told me the other day that he (poor man!) had to give up film criticism after 600 movies. It was all he could take . . . The account of his 600 missions in the cinema is amusing, but also soundly based on fact. I commend it to all who wonder what makes critics tick."

JYMPSON HARMAN (*Evening News*)

"William K. Zinsser was film critic of the *New York Herald Tribune* for more than three years. His book combines a facetious account of the reviewer's way of life, satires on Hollywood's most obvious clichés and some pretty dim anecdotes about the industry's lunatic fringes. No 'B' picture director ever aimed to produce a more conventional entertainment; and few have missed such a humble target with a thud to match Zinsser's . . . a saddening book."

DEREK HILL (*Observer*)

"Bill Zinsser spent over three years as film critic of the *New York Herald Tribune* and his book gently but wittily kids the film business . . . if you are a filmgoer then you'll enjoy this shrewd summing-up of films. And if any producer gets hold of a copy I hope he'll read it from end to end. There are some producers who take themselves oh, so seriously who will blush at the way Mr. Zinsser takes the pants off their business."

DICK RICHARDS (*Picture Show*)

William K. Zinsser: *Seen Any Good Films Lately?* 16s. net

The following books, also published by Hammond, Hammond, have been made into famous films:—

RAISING A RIOT by Alfred Toombs—"Child-lovers and haters will find much to amuse and appal them . . . the story is amiably told, often ruefully, always entertainingly."—JOHN O' LONDON'S

ASK ANY GIRL by Winifred Wolfe—"This is a . . . brightly written satire on a hire-and-fire, take-what-you-fancy society, which is at the same time gay and glittering and immensely alluring to those who can stand the pace."—SUNDAY TIMES

TO HELL AND BACK—"Audie Murphy, a young infantryman, became America's most decorated soldier in the recent war . . . He is now a film star. The odds against anyone with this history writing a good war novel are heavy; but it has happened."—NEWS CHRONICLE

EXECUTIVE SUITE by Cameron Hawley—"This drama takes place in just over twenty-four hours and the action is as quick as the time is short. This is a most powerful and gripping American novel."—PICTURE SHOW

CASH MCCALL—"In Mr. Hawley's adroit hands, money and the drive for money (and the power it gives) can be as exciting as Monroe."—SUNDAY TIMES

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(continued from page 48)

Michel Mourlet has never been, is not and will never be the leader of MacMahonism; if a leader were to be quoted, we would propose the name of Pierre Rissient, an assistant director, who since 1954 never ceased to contribute to the existence of MacMahonism. At a certain time, indeed, the aforesaid Mourlet did frequent the MacMahonist group, but he was excluded due to his opinions.

Mourlet's opinions are his own entire responsibility, therefore it is exclusively himself whom Hoveyda attacks, and not MacMahonism with which the same Hoveyda most often agrees.

All this has recently been cleared up by the creation of the Cercle du Mac-Mahon, a cultural association dealing with the defence and illustration of certain cinematographical theories such as they were previously defined by Pierre Rissient and his friends. Mr. Joseph Losey is the actual president of this Cercle, to which Michel Mourlet does not belong.

5 et 7 Avenue Mac-Mahon,
Paris XVII.

Yours faithfully,
JACQUES SERGUINE,
Vice President,
Cercle du Mac-Mahon.

More about Puerilescu

SIR,—I read with interest M. Jean Tellig's account of Pierre Puerilescu's *La Mort d'une Fille* in your last issue, but am surprised that he makes no mention of the young director's two previous films . . .

After a disturbingly unhappy school life and some months of indecision, Puerilescu persuaded his parents early in 1954 to finance *La Blague*. Shot silent on 16mm, this amazing experiment described the effect on a sixteen-year-old homosexual of a ruthless practical joke played on him by his school-fellows. Confused by their scorn, he vindicates himself by murdering the young boy he loves. Although only 15 minutes long, the film was marked by Puerilescu's probing interest in the human mind—particularly, as he called it, "its rational irrationality"—and his use of clipped, violent images (especially in the scene of the death of the younger boy, half-naked and contorted) deliberately evoked beauty out of the most appalling horror.

In 1955, Puerilescu made *La Naissance d'un Trou* for l'Association de Fabricateurs Français. I believe this to be the most invigoratingly anti-romantic documentary yet made in France, notable for the striking use of the human face, filmed in a series of microscopic close-ups. It was in this film that the director (who was only 20 at

the time) made his first use of the *ondes Martenot* which he explored with such success in *La Mort d'une Fille*. As Puerilescu's sound engineer, I experienced at first hand his exciting experiments with sound, and added to my own store of knowledge by meeting the technical challenge his imagination threw up. Indeed, I had to mix the natural sound of the cement works where the film was made with Pierre LeMay's superb playing of the *ondes* which had been set up in one of the factory's quieter corners. Puerilescu was concerned at this stage with the plastic qualities of the sound-track rather than its poetic ones, and this may perhaps explain why he fell foul of his backers. Astounded at the impact of the first rough-cut, they refused to allow the film to be marketed, and as a result Puerilescu spent the next few years on a starvation diet, refusing to enlist his parents' aid and doing instead occasional criticism for *Cahiers*. Then came the moment when *La Mort d'une Fille* had to become a reality . . .

Your readers will be pleased to learn that he is now preparing his second feature, *La Salope*. "C'est un hommage à Hugo Haas," he told me recently. The film is a re-make of Haas's *Pick-Up*, but in a Camargue setting. Puerilescu hoped to persuade Gabin to do the original Haas role, but the actor had other commitments and the director has decided to play the part himself. The project is destined to become the event of 1961, to prove the maturity of *la nouvelle vague* and establish Puerilescu, still only 25, as the most teeming talent to emerge in France since Germaine Dulac.

Yours faithfully,
DINU MARTELL.

63 Chester Road,
Highgate, N.19.

Puerilescu seems to be catching on. The Sunday Times of Malta, in its issue of December 4th, published a paraphrased version of 'Jean Tellig's' article, presented as a critique by the paper's correspondent on a film which has received "high critical acclaim." It only remains for Puerilescu to make the films with which we (and they) are crediting him.

We have received a letter from three of the film correspondents of Oxford Opinion, taking up some of the comments on their critical approach made in the article "The Critical Question." This letter, which reached us after SIGHT AND SOUND had gone to press, will be published in our next issue.—EDITOR.

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ITALY: Robert Hawkins	POLAND: Boleslaw Michalek
FRANCE: Louis Marcorelles	

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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 3rd day of November, 1960. P. W. Jones (a Commissioner for Oaths).



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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

ALAMO, THE (*United Artists*) Producer-director-star John Wayne's \$12-million monument to the handful of men who saved Texas from the Mexicans in 1836. Plainly inspirational, in a disquieting kind of way; otherwise one more rough-house Western with rock'n'roll interruptions. (Richard Widmark, Laurence Harvey, Frankie Avalon. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

******AVVENTURA, L'** (*Mondial*) A yachting week-end; a disappearance; a search which becomes an investigation into some meanings of love. The range of enquiry in Antonioni's film is that of the novel, the means are triumphantly and entirely those of the cinema. (Monica Vitti, Gabriele Ferzetti, Lea Massari.) *Reviewed.*

***BEN-HUR** (*M-G-M*) Out of 5 years' preparation, 6½ months' shooting at Cinecittà, 40,000 tons of sand and a sea of blood and Camera 65 celluloid, director William Wyler has fished a memorable 9-minute chariot race, some Victorian scripture-book frescoes and an unexpectedly forceful Messala from Stephen Boyd. (Charlton Heston, Jack Hawkins, Hugh Griffith, Haya Harareet. Technicolor, Panavision.)

BREATH OF SCANDAL, A (*Paramount*) Ponti and Giosi's maimed version of *Olympia*, the Molnár satire on turn-of-the-century Viennese society. Despite its wistful *Gigi* overtones (the cast includes Chevalier and Isabel Jeans), the film seems rather to be echoing the old Jeanette MacDonald-Nelson Eddy musicals—without the music. (Sophia Loren, John Gavin; director, Michael Curtiz. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

BUTTERFIELD 8 (*M-G-M*) Elizabeth Taylor as a Manhattan Nastasia Filippovna, scrawling "No Sale" in lipstick on her lover's bedroom mirror, brushing her teeth in whisky and hurtling to her doom in a dear little red two-seater. Sleek and rather splendid. (Laurence Harvey, Eddie Fisher, Mildred Dunnock; director, Daniel Mann. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

CINDERFELLA (*Paramount*) Jerry Lewis as a love-starved lackey in the palatial, heavily mortgaged home of his arrogant stepmother (Judith Anderson) and two objectionable stepbrothers. Lavishly whimsical, and mainly of interest to Lewis and/or Frank Tashlin fans. (Anna Maria Alberghetti, Ed Wynn, Henry Silva. Technicolor.)

CIRCLE OF DECEPTION (*Fox*) A controversial subject the deliberate surrender of a British agent into Gestapo hands, approached gingerly, but without much of an eye to its opportunities or its hazards. Result: standardised adventures, leading up in a way that possibly wasn't quite intended to the big torture scene. (Bradford Dillman, Suzy Parker, Harry Andrews; director, Jack Lee.)

***CRIMINAL, THE** (*Anglo Amalgamated*) Unusually hard if specious investigation of English prisons and their habitués. Muscular dialogue by Alun Owen; explosive direction by Joseph Losey. (Stanley Baker, Margit Saad, Sam Wanamaker, Gregoire Aslan.)

****DOLCE VITA, LA** (*Columbia*) Fellini's elaborate, repetitious attack on Roman corruption and decadence. Plenty of extravagant set pieces; not enough detachment. (Marcello Mastroianni, Anouk Aimée, Anita Ekberg, Yvonne Furneaux. Totalscope.) *Reviewed.*

HELL TO ETERNITY (*Fox*) Lachrymose family episodes and Marine Corps battle scenes prolong the allegedly true story of how a Japanese-reared American private captured 2,000 Japanese. (Jeffrey Hunter, Vic Damone, Sessue Hayakawa; director, Phil Karlson.)

I AIM AT THE STARS (*Columbia*) A baffling attempt to explain the position of the scientist in modern life by characterising the German rocket expert Wernher von Braun as a hero of our age. Curd Jürgens makes him a charming chap who barely realised the Nazis were in power. (Herbert Lom, Victoria Shaw, Gia Scala; director, J. Lee Thompson.) *Reviewed.*

*****JAZZ ON A SUMMER'S DAY** (*Hillcrest*) Yachts on the sound; a rap audience; the Newport, Rhode Island, jazz festival; vivid De Luxe colour: all in all, it is a wonderful summer's day that is synthesised by director Bert Stern, and a documentary film of unusual skill and style. *Reviewed.*

MAN IN THE MOON (*Rank*) A fangless British satire on space travel, bureaucracy, medicine and science. Old chestnuts and popular misconceptions kept alive by Kenneth More and a good-natured supporting cast. (Michael Hordern, Shirley Anne Field; director, Basil Dearden.)

MIDNIGHT LACE (*Rank*) Plucky little American wife of English businessman is tormented over the telephone, dogged in a fog, pushed under a bus and out of a window. All-screaming performance by Doris Day; final reassurance by Scotland Yard that Grosvenor Square is still safe for Americans. (Rex Harrison, Myrna Loy; director, David Miller. Eastman Colour.)

MIRACLE, THE (*Warner-Pathé*) Carroll Baker as a teen-age Spanish postulant, gypsy, flamenco singer and toast of the Continent, unwittingly causing the death of three lovers (not to mention various meteorological disorders and the Battle of Waterloo) in her search for happiness. All shot in Technirama and a Technicolor best described as gorgeous Goyacolor. (Roger Moore, Vittorio Gassman, Katina Paxinou; director, Irving Rapper.)

***NEVER ON SUNDAY** (*United Artists*) Jules Dassin's comedy about a pedantic American's attempt to cultivate the mind of a Greek prostitute. Cheerful, if a bit over-stretched, but the music and the heroine's happy ending interpretations of Greek tragedy are strong assets. (Melina Mercouri, Jules Dassin.) *Reviewed.*

NO KIDDING (*Anglo Amalgamated*) Peter Rogers-Gerald Thomas farce, with more sentiment and less slapstick than usual, recounting the unremarkable adventures which befall a young married couple bent on converting an old house into a holiday home for deprived rich children. (Leslie Phillips, Geraldine McEwan, Julia Lockwood.)

NORTH TO ALASKA (*Fox*) John Wayne as a Tristan of the Klondyke, with Capucine as his Isolde, in one of Henry Hathaway's broadest self-parodies. Enough brawls and mudbaths to send any normal boy into transports, but Freud would have had cause to frown. (Stewart Granger, Fabian, Ernie Kovacs. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)

POLLYANNA (*Disney*) Straight re-make of the Mary Pickford classic about an orphan who dragoons an entire township of stuffy adults into philanthropy by teaching them the "glad game." Hayley Mills does wonders with the little monster. (Jane Wyman, Karl Malden, Adolphe Menjou; director, David Swift. Technicolor.)

PURE HELL OF ST. TRINIAN'S, THE (*British Lion*) Begins quite briskly, with the school destroyed by arson; proceeds plotlessly, with a game cast soldiering their way through some forlorn farce about Whitehall, the Army and a plot to sell the Sixth form to the Arabs. (Cecil Parker, George Cole, Joyce Grenfell; director, Frank Launder.)

*****SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING** (*British Lion/Bryanston*) The engagingly frank and instinctive protest of a hard-drinking, wife-poaching, practical joking "hero of our times," seething with more life than his factory-backstreet preserves allow. By far the best of Woodfall Productions' gambles to date. (Albert Finney, Rachel Roberts, Shirley Anne Field; director, Karel Reisz.) *Reviewed.*

*****SHADOWS** (*British Lion*) John Cassavetes' forcefully improvised description of New York nights, love and the loneliness of a young Negro. A casual, fragmentary, absolutely contemporary example of non-Hollywood American cinema. (Ben Carruthers, Anthony Ray, Lelia Goldoni.)

****SHOOT THE PIANIST** (*Gala*) Truffaut's inventive, often brilliant, but pretty confused attempt to work farce, tragedy, psychology and Hollywood doodlings into the story of a timid pianist whose inability to act leads to the destruction of the women he loves. (Charles Aznavour, Albert Rémy, Nicole Berger. Dyaliscope.)

SONG WITHOUT END (*Columbia*) A droopy-sleeved, *décolleté* Dirk Bogarde plays Liszt in a *legato* romantic confection, directed for the most part by George Cukor after Charles Vidor's death. (Capucine, Genevieve Page, Ivan Desny, Martita Hunt. Technicolor, CinemaScope.)

SOUTH PACIFIC (*Fox*) High, wide and generally unhandsome version of the stage musical, stodgily directed by Joshua Logan. Happily the songs survive a welter of eccentric colour effects and jungle décor. (Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

SOUTH SEAS ADVENTURE (*Cinerama*) Two girls voyage from Los Angeles to Honolulu, taking in surf-riding, Tahiti, Queen Salote's tortoise, Fiji, manhood initiation rites in the New Hebrides, Maoris and Bondi Beach lifeguards. One or two pretty views barely compensate for the sense of strain. (Commentary by Orson Welles; various directors. Technicolor, Cinerama.)

***SPARTACUS** (*Rank*) Howard Fast's story about Rome's slave uprising offers Stanley Kubrick the chance of an ambivalent dip into the blood-red waters of commercial Hollywood spectacle. With Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton and Peter Ustinov on hand, the acting (and Rome) come off an indisputable best. (Kirk Douglas, Jean Simmons, John Gavin. Technicolor, Super Technirama-70.) *Reviewed.*

SUBTERRANEANS, THE (*M-G-M*) Leslie Caron and George Peppard cruelly wasted on a silly, psychotically trimmed novelette about the "new bohemians" of San Francisco's North Beach area. (Janice Rule, Roddy McDowall. Technicolor, CinemaScope.)

***SUNDOWNERS, THE** (*Warner-Pathé*) Robert Mitchum and Deborah Kerr in a story of trail-riding, sheep-shearing and horse-racing in the Australia of thirty years ago. Affectionate direction by Fred Zinnemann, but it all rather tends to go on and on. (Peter Ustinov, Glynnis Johns. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

SWORD OF SHERWOOD FOREST (*Columbia*) Sinister Sheriff (Peter Cushing) and evil Earl (Richard Pasco) plan to murder the Archbishop of Canterbury. TV's Robin Hood (Richard Greene) tramps through Nottinghamshire's green belt to save him. (Niall MacGinnis, Sarah Branch; director, Terence Fisher. Technicolor, Megascopes.)

THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER, THE (*Columbia*) An Anglo-Hispano-American version, with Superdynamation in place of Swift's satire, of *Gulliver's Travels*: overplayed, pantomimic. (Kerwin Mathews, Jo Morrow, June Thorburn; director, Jack Sher. Technicolor.)

TOO HOT TO HANDLE (*Warner-Pathé*) French journalist (Carl Boehm) lifts the lid off the Soho strip-clubs in the sort of low-toned tract which gives its *dramatis personae* names like Johnny Solo, Midnight, and Diamonds Dinelli. (Leo Genn, Jayne Mansfield; director, Terence Young. Eastman Colour.)

***TUNES OF GLORY** (*United Artists*) Tension, suicide and insanity in a Highland Regiment's officers' quarters. John Mills is impressive as the haggard C.O. resented by his eccentric predecessor (Alec Guinness), despite a script and direction which never really get to the root of the matter. (Dennis Price, Gordon Jackson; director, Ronald Neame. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

UNDER TEN FLAGS (*Paramount*) Van Heflin as the saintly commander of a German "ghost" raider, hounded down by an Admiralty Captain Bligh (Charles Laughton). Shoddily made and staggering in its naiveté. (John Ericson, Mylene Demongeot; directors, Duilio Coletti, Silvio Narizzano.)

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